

1995

The daughters of rural Massachusetts :: women and autonomy, 1800-1860/

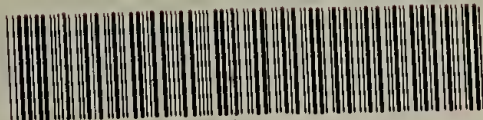
Glendyne R. Wergland
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/theses>

Wergland, Glendyne R., "The daughters of rural Massachusetts :: women and autonomy, 1800-1860/" (1995). *Masters Theses 1911 - February 2014*. 2073.

Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/theses/2073>

This thesis is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses 1911 - February 2014 by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.



312066011281249

**THE DAUGHTERS OF RURAL MASSACHUSETTS:
WOMEN AND AUTONOMY, 1800-1860**

A Thesis Presented

by

GLENDYNE R. WERGLAND

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

February 1995

Department of History

© Copyright by Glendyne R. Wergland 1995

All Rights Reserved

THE DAUGHTERS OF RURAL MASSACHUSETTS

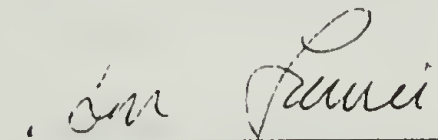
WOMEN AND AUTONOMY, 1800-1860

A Thesis Presented

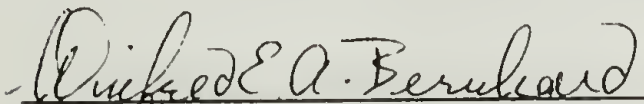
by


GLENDYNE R. WERGLAND


Approved as to style and content by:



Bruce Laurie, Chair


Winfred E.A. Bernhard, Member


Barry Levy, Member


Bruce Laurie, Department Head
History Department

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to the number of people who made this thesis a reality. First, Bruce Laurie, my advisor and thesis committee chairman, asked questions and suggested alternate lines of reasoning when I thought I had reached an impasse with the material. Winfred E.A. Bernhard, in whose seminar this study was first born, provided encouragement throughout the process. Barry Levy, the third member of my thesis committee, added considerably to my understanding of the possibilities of quantification. Judy Ruttenberg, my sister teaching assistant, read the manuscript and offered suggestions.

My daughters, Jennifer Wergland and Karyn Wergland, proofread portions. As the most recent of a long line of this family's stubborn and independent women who sought to maximize their own autonomy in a variety of subtle and not-so-subtle ways, they have been a continuing source of inspiration. They remind me that all women, whether or not they are wives or sisters, are daughters first.

Last but not least, my husband, Gerald Pendleton Wergland, through his generous support, made all this possible.

ABSTRACT

THE DAUGHTERS OF RURAL MASSACHUSETTS

WOMEN AND AUTONOMY, 1800-1860

FEBRUARY 1995

GLENDYNE R. WERGLAND, B.A., MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE

M.A., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Bruce Laurie

This study addresses a series of questions about household demographics, property ownership, testation, and employment changes that benefited women by increasing their potential for autonomy in rural western Massachusetts from 1800 to 1860. Increasing numbers of women headed their own households and appeared on tax lists as single women and widows. Women also inherited real estate from both women and men. Single women favored women as their primary beneficiaries. In the 1830s testators sharply increased bequests with "sole and separate use" provisions to protect married women's separate property -- well in advance of the passage of the Massachusetts Married Women's Property Act of 1855. In addition, fathers showed a slight favoritism for their daughters in bequests during the mid-nineteenth century, when more and more heirs had emigrated west. As increasing numbers of women owned property, there was increasing commentary linking women's property ownership with the right to vote.

PREFACE

It was perhaps 1954 when I realized that women lived in a different world than men. At age six, I knew that women spoke a different language among themselves, and that men did not speak the same language. The faces women presented to each other were not the masks they put on in front of their husbands, brothers, fathers, and sons. Feminine reality was a fuller, more supportive reality than what I could see of men's reality. But perhaps that was because men wore masks of their own.

My paternal great-grandmother, Gertrude Smith Cospers, was one of six daughters. She had one son and four daughters, including my grandmother, Gertrude Elizabeth Cospers Beemer Weber. My grandmother and her sisters were so close that on the occasional Christmas when her husband had to work over the holiday, she would leave him behind in Oklahoma and travel half a day to Texas to be with her sisters. My maternal grandmother, Bessie Irene Heller Goin, also came from a family of sisters with only one brother. Both grandmothers and all my paternal great-aunts enjoyed the company of women. When they were roistering in the kitchen cleaning up after the holiday feasts, conversation would be lively and intimate -- until a man entered the room. They curbed their tongues in the presence of any men. I could see for myself that among them there was more communication, more cooperation, and less competition. They were, in fact, a community of women. That sort of community can be seen today at any gathering of women who are on intimate terms. To judge from what my grandmother told me, the intimacy of women is little

different today than it was in the 1880s when my great-grandmother was growing up with her five sisters in rural West Virginia.

These women allowed me into their lives from earliest childhood. They taught me more than domestic skills; they also taught me how to be a woman, and how much or how little I could expect from other women or men. Though they appeared to my child's eyes as "domestic beings," all of them were employed, most of them throughout their adult lives. My mother, Dolores Goin Beemer Canfield taught school. My grandmother and godmother were hairdressers. Another great-aunt was a secretary-bookkeeper, and yet another was the accountant for what grew into a multimillion dollar family business. My pious, meek maternal grandmother worked in a munitions factory during World War II, packing hand grenades. But I saw them only at home, where they showed themselves unmasked to me.

This is why, when I saw evidence in the federal census of women without men in their households, I recognized the fact that some women's comfort factor is immeasurably higher when men are not present. Women who banded together in their own enclaves did more than preserve their independence. They maintained a bond with other women, a bond which could have been damaged by men. They lived with each other in a greater sense of equality than would have been possible with men. And some of those women secured their personal safety from men who abused them in the appalling and varied ways that men have been known to abuse women. Whether it was because together women could afford housing that none could afford separately, or because they needed or could offer nursing care to each other, or needed the help of a friend or kinswoman in raising children in widowhood, or

because they were financially dependent, or simply because they preferred each others' company to that of men, this much is historic fact: women banded together to form feminine households. For those women, the search for autonomy depended on help from other women.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
PREFACE	vi
LIST OF CHARTS	xii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	xiv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xv
 Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Questions Asked	8
Rationale	9
Sample Towns	11
Definitions	14
2. DEMOGRAPHICS OF FEMALE PROPERTY OWNERS	19
Marital Status	20
Type of Property Owned	21
Race	22
Age	24
Singlehood in Massachusetts	27
Ratio of Males to Females	27
Education	29
Patterns of Settlement	32
Social Activism	33
3. QUESTIONING MARRIAGE AS A DESIRABLE STATE	35
What Women Wrote and Read	35
Portraiture	64

4.	CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN'S LANDOWNERSHIP	67
	Comparison of Landownership Levels	68
	Widows as Landowners	72
	Western Massachusetts Widows	78
	Western Massachusetts Daughters as Heirs	84
	Persistence	88
5.	MASSACHUSETTS MARRIED WOMEN'S PROPERTY LAW	91
	Common Law	93
	Dower Law	94
	Equity	97
	Passage of Massachusetts' Married Women's Property Acts	101
	Tax Protests	112
6.	FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS	116
	Gender Ratio	116
	Householders not Necessarily Landowners	122
	Occupations	123
	Employees and Entrepreneurs	124
	Interdependency and Dependents	137
	Farm owners	142
	Beyond the Bonds of Womanhood: Susan Dunham	153
7.	BERKSHIRE COUNTY WOMEN'S WILLS	160
	Testators' Real Estate Ownership	162
	Bequest Patterns	168
	Women	168
	Men	176
	Sole and Separate Use Provisions	180
8.	CONCLUSION	184

APPENDICES	192
A. CENSUS VS. TAX ASSESSORS' LISTS	193
B. METHODOLOGY	195
Tax Records	195
Women's Wills	197
BIBLIOGRAPHY	198

LIST OF CHARTS

Chart	Page
1. Western Massachusetts Sample Towns	13
2. Women and Landownership in Western Massachusetts 1800-1850	17
3. Marital Status of Female Berkshire County Testators	21
4. Age of Female Landowners and Heads-of-Households	25
5. Ratio of Massachusetts' Adult Males to Female, 1850	27
6. Literacy of Female Testators, Berkshire County	31
7. Comparison of Landownership Levels: Female and Male	69
8. Real Wealth and Age of 1850 Female Landowners	74
9. Marital Status of Landowning Testators 1800-1860	75
10. Persistence of Female Taxpayers 1800-1820	89
11. Population in Female-Headed Households, 1800-1860	117
12. Gender Balance in Households Headed by Women	118
13. Occupations of Dalton Women, 1860	128
14. Berkshire Businesswomen with Credit Ratings, 1840-1870	131
15. Butter Production: Men's and Women's Farms, 1850	148
16. Berkshire County Wills, 1780-1860	161
17. Property Ownership by Female Testators, 1780-1860	163
18. Landownership Levels by Female Testators, 1830-1860	165
19. 92 Female Testators' Real Estate Compared with 75 Males'	167
20. Comparison of Beneficiaries of Single and Married Women	168

21.	Primary Beneficiary of Single Women	172
22.	Primary Beneficiary of 120 Berkshire County Men	176

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1.	Western Massachusetts Sample Towns	11
2.	Elizabeth Freeman	23
3.	Home of Louisa and General John Ashley	81
4.	Mary Hawks	86
5.	Sarah Snell Bryant	124
6.	Susan Dunham	156

ABBREVIATIONS

BA	Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield, MA
BCP	Berkshire County Probate Record
DPR	Deerfield Probate Records, HNFL
Dun & Co.	Massachusetts Volume 3, R.G. Dun and Company Collection, Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration, Boston, MA
HNFL	Henry N. Flynt Library, Old Deerfield
MHS	Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston
PPH: AC	Porter Phelps Huntington Papers, Amherst College
PVMA	Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, Old Deerfield
PVR	Pittsfield Vital Records
SVR	Sheffield Vital Records
UMass	University of Massachusetts at Amherst

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study addresses a series of questions about Massachusetts women in the early nineteenth century, a time of profound and unsettling change. Every sector of society was touched by change from 1800 to 1860. Capitalism expanded. Industrialization provided new opportunities for employment and investment. Cities grew with industrialization. Immigration increased. Transient men and women roamed from job to job. Deference declined. The increasingly cyclical economy offered both opportunity and disaster. Improvements in transportation systems made western lands accessible as well as providing business and investment opportunities. New England residents migrated west. Women acquired more education. Antiestablishment religious movements questioned orthodoxy. Reform movements grew. The force of the market revolution swept away certain eighteenth-century mores and replaced them with a new social order. Economics, religion and migration changed the social fabric, giving it a new texture and subtle patterns previously unknown. Those changes in the fabric of early America, alarming as they were to New England traditionalists and defenders of the establishment, influenced men and women, their options, and the life choices they made. All of these changes transformed the status quo, and made "the pulpits ring, and the presses groan," as Rev. John Leland of Lanesborough wrote in 1838.¹ Western Massachusetts women measurably benefited from some of those changes.

¹ Miss L.F. Greene, ed., The Writings of the Late John Leland (New York: 1845), p. 727.

There is no lack of information on the ways women were controlled by Massachusetts custom and law: what this study addresses is how women's property ownership revealed their agency and/or potential for independence from the profound control of a society established by Puritan males and controlled in the nineteenth century by Yankee males. Though autonomy is hardly a measurable quantity, there is evidence suggesting the increasing possibility of autonomy for Massachusetts women from 1800 to 1860. The evidence from tax records, women's wills, men's wills, women's singleness, and demographic shifts in household gender balance shows that women increasingly made choices that would enlarge the areas of autonomy in their lives. Some results of this study were predictable; others emerged as patterns that could not be ignored. This evidence, though circumstantial, points up women's desire for greater independence as well as their means of achieving it, or for more influence within (and sometimes outside of) the household. Furthermore, by mid-century, Massachusetts men boosted women's autonomy, acting as allies in ways both public and private. They legislated tax abatements for widows and single women. They bequeathed their widows substantially more than dower thirds. They stipulated that female heirs should have full control over property bequeathed to them without spousal interference or control. And they passed bills to protect the earnings and property of married women. Women and men thus acted to increase women's independence.

Though there is concern today among historians with the need for synthesis, synthesis should not be pursued by deliberately ignoring the groups, such as single women, who by not marrying and therefore rejecting the mainstream ideal,

deliberately held themselves apart from the control of men in one of the most basic ways possible. In addition, the concept of separate spheres may seem to allow for a separate women's world, but that concept has its own drawbacks, for men could be women's allies. How, then, can separate spheres be brought into synthesis? Perhaps, in addition to measuring women by masculine standards such as property ownership, we should examine the uniquely feminine ways they achieved or increased their autonomy, such as remaining single and/or setting up their own households as the "paradise of women."² And we should examine the ways that men acted as allies in securing and protecting women's independence.

As has been amply demonstrated by Nancy Cott and Suzanne Lebsock, women first used domestic ideology to increase their influence in the domestic domain, where they were increasingly in charge of family health, education and morality, and then extended their influence into the public sphere by attacking tight lacing, loose morals and intemperance, and by helping the less fortunate on a community-wide scale just as they helped their neighbors.³ One paradox of "woman's sphere," therefore, was that middle-class women manipulated it to increase their own autonomy in ways never intended by prescriptive authors extolling the benefits of domesticity.⁴ For instance,

² Harriet Martineau, quoted in Elisabeth Anthony Dexter, Career Women of America 1776-1840 (Clifton, NJ: 1972 reprint of 1950 ed.), p. 221.

³ Nancy F. Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Suzanne Lebsock, The Free Women of Petersburg (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984), p. 53.

⁴ Mary Beth Norton, "The Paradox of 'Women's Sphere,'" Women of America: A History, Carol Ruth Berkin and Mary Beth Norton, eds. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), p. 148.

single women who bequeathed property to other women held not only themselves but also their property out of the reach of men.

All women did not adapt themselves to the cult of domesticity. Domesticity simply was not practical or economically feasible for large numbers of women who were poor, worked for wages, ran their own businesses, operated farms, or emigrated west. Many women, either due to circumstance or choice, disregarded or adapted the code of domesticity to meet their own needs. It is doubtful that women in general were living up to the prescriptive ideal by the middle of the nineteenth century. If women already were the perfectly pure, pious and passive angels of domesticity bruited about by prescriptive authors, it would have been unnecessary to promote that as the womanly ideal. Redundancy would have made domesticity an unmarketable premise.

Conversely, if the social order were threatened by challenges to women's domesticity, for instance, by females on the loose, gadding about the countryside often unencumbered by chaperons and free to come and go as they pleased (as were thousands of single women by midcentury) or by women who were less than chaste, or by women who openly questioned the established social order, then perhaps there would have been a social incentive for prescriptive authors to remind those females of their place.⁵ Wage-earning women and speakers for women's rights were conspicuously absent from their hearthsides. Increasing numbers of single women stubbornly refused to marry, many of whom apparently had no fixed address, but perambulated as need arose from one job or set of relatives to another. Speaking in

⁵ Norton, p. 146.

public, petitioning the legislature, demanding political rights -- even though women did much of that in defense of the family -- such activities were not sanctioned by domesticity. It would have been in the interests of capitalists (a fraternity that included publishers of prescriptive literature) to keep such assertive women in their place: a passive worker, or a passive wife or daughter, is so much less trouble than one who asserts herself. To the purveyors of domesticity, even a few rabble rousers could have been perceived as a threat.⁶ Certainly it would not have been necessary to remind women of where they belonged if they were staying in their place already. It is, after all, unnecessary to preach virtue to the virtuous. For all these reasons, it seems likely that women were exhorted primarily because they did not live according to those prescribed values.

On the other hand, perhaps the cult of domesticity depended on the physical location of women and of men. Perhaps the eighteenth-century subordination of women depended on colonial men being on the farm or working in a shop attached to the home, where they could exert maximum oversight over their wives. When industrialization moved men out of the home, women probably experienced more personal autonomy unsupervised by men. As rising urban middle class women, freed from domestic cares by servants, had fewer demands on their time (though women's diaries seem to indicate otherwise) perhaps "society" felt it necessary to remind them of their duty to remain submissive, pious and domestic. After all, women reformers'

⁶ Norton & Berkin, 6 & 140, offer reminders that prescriptive literature may have borne little resemblance to the realities of many nineteenth-century women's lives. Consider the corollary of the relation of our own lives to late twentieth-century advice literature (whose sales depend on the public's fears and insecurities more than it reflects reality).

activities sought to limit traditional prerogatives of men: drinking and visiting prostitutes. By controlling women, perhaps prescriptive authors sought to lessen women's efforts to control men's unacceptable behavior (even though women used defense of the home and family to buttress those arguments). Women's success in reform movements could affect the status quo, which provoked authors of prescriptive works to check their progress. In the small towns of western Massachusetts, however, many women simply ignored the doctrine of domesticity. They couldn't afford not to. Their disregard can be measured through their bequests, through their employment, through their singleness and through their status as householders.

Domesticity's promoters failed to convince all women they were better off married. Growing numbers of New England's single women, many of whom stayed determinedly unwed, were told that they could achieve fulfillment as women only within the bonds of matrimony and under the burdens of motherhood. Unmarried women may have been the greatest threat to domesticity because they had seized control of "the means of production" in its fullest sense (as their married sisters, by limiting their numbers of children, had in a partial sense).⁷ The fact that the proportions of single women grew even as the cult of domesticity waxed should show that nineteenth-century women, unlike those two hundred years earlier, not only rejected the notion of marriage or remarriage, but were supported in that notion by someone other than the authors of prescriptive works. In rural western

⁷ Adam Gopnik, "The Ghost of the Glass House," The New Yorker (May 9, 1994), p. 60. Gopnik provides a reminder of the parallel between childbearing and working for the capitalist patriarchy.

Massachusetts, that support shows in the increasing numbers of women and men who bequeathed property to single women from 1800 to 1860.⁸

Had families not contributed to their support, or had employment not been available, or had it not been socially acceptable to remain unwed, many single women and widows would have married or remarried as did women of earlier generations. Marriage was an economic necessity in the seventeenth century for most women; it was less so by the mid-nineteenth century. Women's view of marriage changed even as the cult of domesticity flogged them toward matrimony. Though prescriptive works told nineteenth-century women that they would be fulfilled only within marriage, many single women remained unmarried, and widows refused to remarry. They knew better. By the measures of marital status and rate of remarriage, the cult of domesticity was less than victorious. In western Massachusetts, increasing numbers of households headed by women from 1800 to 1860 show the cult of domesticity was increasingly disregarded.

In addition to singlehood, women's autonomy could be measured by property ownership, a concept central to this thesis. Through bequests, women and men aided female relatives in achieving property ownership in increasing numbers from 1800 to 1860. Though never a majority, women property owners grew both in number and percentage. By that measure, women gained in autonomy even as promotion of domesticity grew. The Married Women's Property Act (1855) extended property

⁸ It should be clear from the evidence mustered here that I reject the notion that the eighteenth century was a sort of "golden age" for women. Based on increasing numbers of women heads-of-households and increasing property ownership by women, things got better for women, not worse, from the late eighteenth century to the late nineteenth century.

rights to married women. Perhaps these laws were simply a ploy by males to protect their property from creditors, as suggested by Suzanne Leacock, Marylynn Salmon and Elizabeth Warbasse. If so, the strategy backfired: instead of increasing men's control over property, they measurably increased wives' control.⁹ In western Massachusetts, married women's wills with stringent stipulations on their husbands showed that some women maximized their control even posthumously.

A woman with property -- gained by whatever means -- was a woman with more influence than a woman without property. Property ownership was one standard by which men measured each other, and which was associated with independence of judgment.¹⁰ A woman with property was therefore less easy to ignore or dismiss as inconsequential. And when propertied women adopted the revolutionary slogan of "taxation without representation" in reference to their lack of voting rights even though they paid taxes, some men agreed with them. Other men, reminded of revolutionary ideology, surely squirmed in discomfort.

Questions Asked

The following questions guided this study. Who were the women who owned real estate in western Massachusetts between 1800 and 1860? What was their marital

⁹ Suzanne Leacock, The Free Women of Petersburg (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984), p. 53; Elizabeth B. Warbasse, The Changing Legal Rights of Married Women 1800-1861 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987), pp. vii-ix; Marylynn Salmon, Women and the Law of Property in Early America (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

¹⁰ Linda Kerber, "Women and the Reinterpretation of the Revolution," Women in the Age of the American Revolution, Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), p. 30.

status -- married, single, divorced or widowed -- and how did they become landowners? To what degree did they appear to be financially independent (or able to live independently in their own households)? How did women support themselves? Did they persist on tax lists? Why -- or why not? Where in the economic hierarchy of their towns did women landowners fall?¹¹ Were women represented in the same proportions as men at equivalent levels of property ownership?

After a startling pattern appeared in the gender balance of households headed by women, other questions arose. Why did female-headed households have such a preponderance of females, when they could be expected to have only one "missing male" -- the father, husband or brother who had left or died? Would an increasing proportion of the population living in female-headed households affect society?

Different questions drove the reading of nearly 500 wills written in Berkshire County from 1780 to 1860. Where did women get property -- through marriage, inheritance or by other means? Did they own it outright or have only lifetime use? Did property enable them to live unmarried? To whom did they bequeath it? Did women show gender bias in making bequests? Did men?

Rationale

This work begins in 1800 because there is precious little research on women's wealth at the start of the nineteenth century. We are swimming in information on women in the colonial period, in the American Revolution, and from the industrial era

¹¹ Economic standing was not necessarily the same as social standing. A respected widow or a midwife could have been accorded a place in the social hierarchy that her economic worth did not necessarily reflect.

of 1830 or 1840 on -- but there is little data on women's property ownership from 1800 to 1820. The endpoint of 1860 allows examination of changes occurring after Massachusetts women secured property rights. The data for 1800 to 1820 serve as a baseline for comparison with later decades. The results can then be used to compare other communities, other states, other years -- and other women.

Both Lee Soltow and Robert Doherty exclude women from their studies of property ownership, because few women independently owned property.¹² Their exclusion of women is a sort of "benign neglect," a way of erasing females from the historical record; this is shortsighted. Historians need quantified data about women just as they do about men. Furthermore, these women's property ownership and in some cases their level of financial independence show that they could have been more socially significant than Soltow and Doherty believe. Considering how closely property ownership was tied to voting rights in Massachusetts, the increase in property ownership by women, as well as financial independence of single women could be viewed as a prerequisite to women achieving the right to vote. Women's rights advocates, in fact, used "taxation without representation" to argue for suffrage.

When early American women property owners are seen only as a tiny fraction of the whole, they are barely significant from a statistical point of view. On the other hand, they were potentially independent women. Female property owners were

¹² Lee Soltow, Distribution of Wealth and Income in the United States in 1798 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989); Soltow, Men and Wealth in the United States, 1850-1870 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); Robert Doherty, Society and Power: Five New England Towns, 1800-1860 (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977). Doherty at least was gracious enough to admit that excluding women had perhaps been a mistake.

forerunners in the struggle for economic rights for women, serving as examples to the women who would later succeed in securing those rights.

Sample Towns

This study is based on town tax assessors' lists, probate records and federal censuses from 1800 through 1860. Aside from availability of local records, towns were chosen for variety of size and geographic distribution throughout Massachusetts' Berkshire County and old Hampshire County. Those counties were rural/agrarian with emerging industrialization in the early nineteenth century so this study examined hilltowns, valley towns, market towns, county seats and early mill towns.

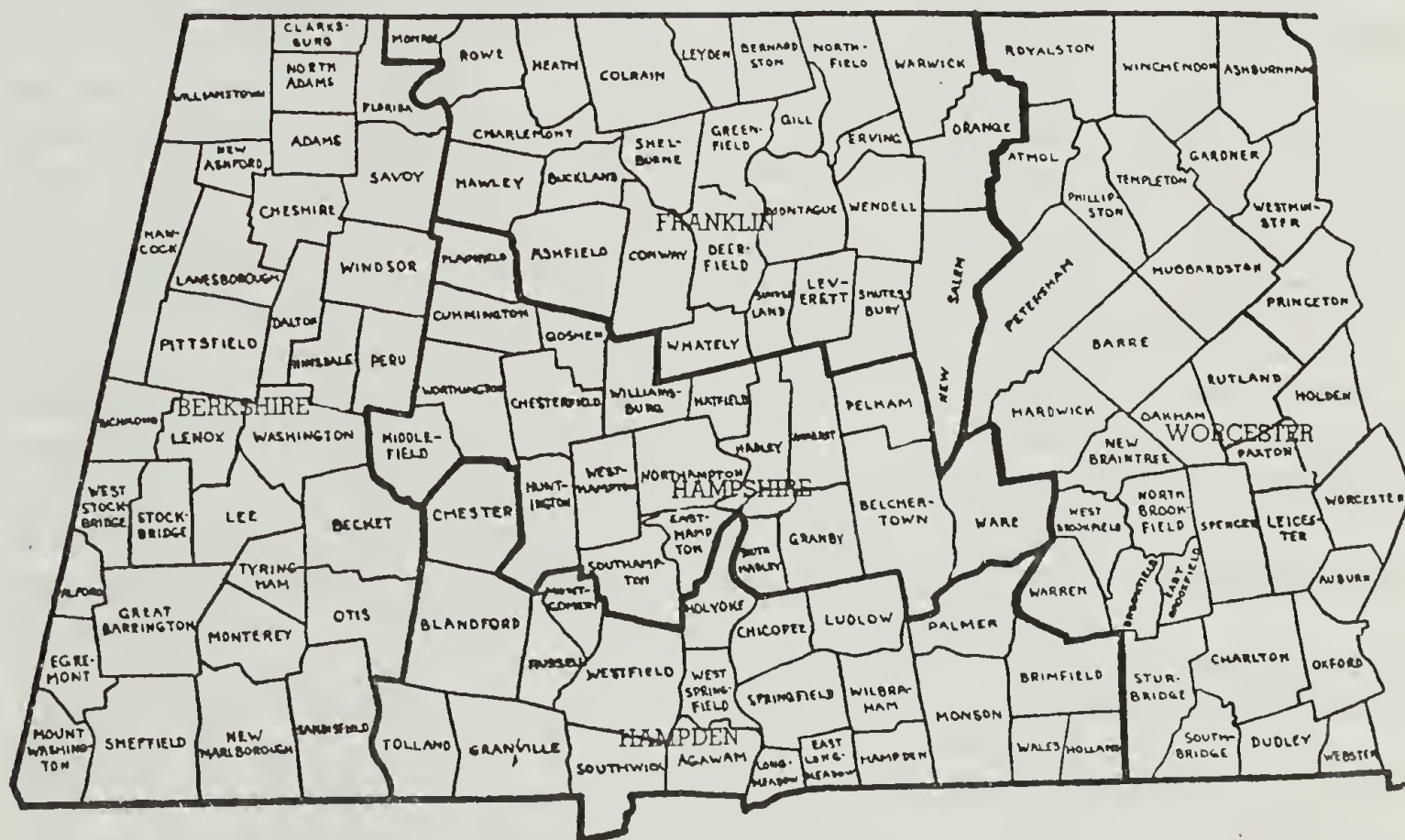


Illustration 1. Western Massachusetts Sample Towns (Adapted from Historical Data Relating to Counties, Cities and Towns in Massachusetts (Massachusetts, 1948).)

County seats and mill towns were growing in population; agrarian towns were stagnating or in decline. Towns selected were Pittsfield, Lanesborough, Stockbridge, Sheffield, Dalton, Northampton, Ashfield, Deerfield, Blandford, Granby and Goshen.¹³ Differences and similarities can be seen in the following chart, which shows towns that were county seats, sample towns' locations (Berkshire County or Connecticut River Valley) and business orientation (market, agriculture or manufacturing), as well as population change.

¹³ After the first seven towns were done, the data for 1810 was so close to that for 1800 that I stopped quantifying 1810; additional labor yielded no new data. Also, equivalent information for all towns was not available; text and/or notes indicate where a smaller sample was used. Some towns had no tax records for census years, but did have records for intervening years: the Massachusetts Direct Tax of 1798 had to serve for Lanesborough's and Dalton's 1800; Sheffield's first tax list was for 1801; Stockbridge had available only 1803 & 1826, Ashfield, 1799 & 1817, Goshen, 1802 for 1800, Northampton, 1814 instead of 1820, and Granby, 1824 for 1820. (Most towns had 100% valuation lists for 1850 and 1860, and I have noted where lists were not available.) This undoubtedly contributed to the discrepancy between census and tax lists; however, in towns with assessors' valuation lists for census years, there were startling discrepancies between the two. (See Appendix.) Furthermore, extant lists were inconsistent except that most of them were in alphabetical order. Few of the early lists included 100% valuation, which necessitated calculating, as closely as possible, the tax rate by comparing widows' & estates' valuations with probate records and/or the 1798 Massachusetts Direct Tax. Using several taxpayers, it was possible to determine their average tax rate, and calculate the 100% valuation of their holdings from that.

New England towns were, as Arthur Darling quoted, a "multitude of little republics," -- quite evident in the inconsistency of local records! (Arthur B. Darling, Political Changes in Massachusetts, 1824-1848 (Cos Cob, CT: John E. Edwards, 1968), 36-37 n. 72.)

Rural areas and small towns were most representative of the population of Massachusetts 1800-1820 because the urban population of the state was only 21-23% during those decades. Yasukichi Yasuba, Birth Rates of the White Population in the United States, 1800-1860 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), 143. Had I included an urban area such as Boston or one of the larger eastern Massachusetts towns, the "weight" of even one city's population could have skewed the results of my smalltown sample. In addition, because an urban area would have offered different opportunities for women, it would have been unrepresentative of nearly 80% of the rest of the population.

Chart 1. Western Massachusetts Sample Towns

Town	Co Seat	Berk	Ct R	Mkt	Agric	Mfg	Pop Δ
Pittsfield	x	x		x	x	x	+35%
Lanesborough		x			x		
Stockbridge		x			x		+44%
Sheffield		x		x	x		
Dalton		x			x	x	+53%
Northampton	x		x	x	x	x	+31%
Ashfield		x			x		
Deerfield			x	x	x		
Granby			x		x		
Goshen		x			x		
Blandford		x			x		

Chart 1. Western Massachusetts Sample Towns.

The sample towns' population, 16,624 in 1800, 18,440 in 1820, and 24,872 in 1850, was about 20% of the total in Berkshire, Hampshire and Franklin Counties (82,855 in 1800, 18,440 in 1820 and 116,193 in 1850). All towns with no increase were in the official state aggregate of agricultural towns, which shrank in population 2% in Franklin County and half a percent in Hampshire County, and grew 2% in Berkshire County from 1820 to 1840. Though the population was growing, the growth occurred

primarily in the manufacturing and commercial centers, which are noted in the chart above with percentages attached to their growth rates.¹⁴

County seats and farming communities showed different patterns of women's property ownership (as noted), which validated the choice of a variety of towns. Availability of local tax lists dating to the early 1800s was a limitation on the study. In several cases, where lists for 1800 (or any year close to 1800) were unavailable or obviously incomplete, the Massachusetts Direct Tax of 1798 was used to quantify real estate ownership.¹⁵ Some towns had lists missing for later years.

Definitions

Before proceeding, some definitions might be in order. A taxpayer is a person who was assessed a tax, whether she or he owned real estate or personal estate. (Tax lists include many males old enough to be assessed a poll tax but lacking property of

¹⁴ Jesse Chickering, A Statistical View of the Population of Massachusetts, From 1765 to 1840 (Boston: 1846), pp. 24-28, 47-49. One town, Blandford, began the century as part of old Hampshire County and ended in Hampden County.

¹⁵ Had I realized the difficulties in working with local tax records, I might have chosen another topic. Fortunately, I did not read Edward Pessen's comment on the subject until I was already engrossed in it. Pessen's exact words were, "Undeterred by warnings about the great expenditure of time involved in researching this material and fortified by my conviction that solid evidence of this sort was indispensable to a serious study of wealth, I proceeded to examine the tax assessments Much time was indeed required -- if fortunately less than a 'lifetime' -- to construct usable lists of the wealthy and their assessed worth out of the chaotic raw data files by contemporary assessors." Unlike Pessen's urban wealthy, western Massachusetts property owners in some towns were taxed on income ("faculty,") as well as on real and personal estate. Like Pessen's cities, each of these towns' property was valued at different percentages for the years examined -- a fact which necessitated a lot of calculator pounding. Edward Pessen, Riches, Class and Power Before the Civil War (Lexington, MA: Heath, 1973), 11-14.

For information on the faculty tax, see James P. Walsh, "'Mechanics and Citizens': The Connecticut Artisans' Protest of 1792," WMQ ser. 3, v. XLII #1 (January 1985), p. 68.

their own.) A property owner is someone who owned either realty or personalty, but not necessarily both. Some women with no real estate are listed as taxpayers and/or property owners; if they owned no realty, they must have owned personalty to have been on the list. The main distinction is between taxpayers, who may have owned no real estate, and landowners, who definitely did own real estate. A head of household (HOH) is so designated on the census schedules as the head of a household. A head of household did not necessarily appear on tax lists, in which case we infer that she was a renter or owned no real estate and probably not enough personal estate to be taxable. A woman who owned real estate would be both a taxpayer and a property owner, but not necessarily a head of household, in which case she may have lived in a household headed by someone else, as was the case with many daughters, widows and spinsters who owned or controlled real estate but boarded with kin or friends.¹⁶ Comparing both census and tax lists was essential to draw distinctions between women who might otherwise have appeared to be independent and/or property owners.¹⁷

¹⁶ In colonial Massachusetts, unmarried men and women were expected to remain under the jurisdiction of their fathers, masters, or other authority figures. Toby Ditz, "Ownership and Obligation: Inheritance and Patriarchal Households in Connecticut, 1750-1820," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d series, v. XLVII no. 2 (April 1990), 237. Considering the increasing number of women heads-of-households 1800-1820, family government must have been loosening its grip on Massachusetts women during this period.

¹⁷ In some towns there was a high correlation between the two lists; in others, the tax assessor and the census taker might have been in different towns, because the assessors list of women property owners bore no resemblance to the enumerator's list of women heads of households. Possible reasons why lists do not correlate include variations on the idea that a taxpayer is not necessarily a head-of-household (HOH). See Appendix for comparison of tax lists with census real estate holdings.

For these purposes, western Massachusetts is defined as the western end of the state, or Berkshire County and the area covering the original Hampshire County, (now Hampshire, Franklin and Hampden counties). This area includes the Berkshire Hills and the Connecticut River Valley, which are (and were) politically influenced by eastern Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York.

Much of the following analysis is based on the data in the chart below.

Additional information is distributed throughout the text in more digestible bits and with greater detail.

Chart 2. Women and Landownership in Western Massachusetts 1800-1850

	1800	1820	1850	% Increase 1800-1850
Population	16,624	18,440	24,872	67%
Average household size	6.3	6.1	5.3	n.a.
Households headed by women	70 (3%)	167 (6%)	388 (8%)	454%
Women's avg. household size	5	4	4.4	n.a.
Ratio age 26+ ♂ to ♀ ¹⁸	104:100	96:100	95:100 ¹⁹	n.a.
Women landowners ²⁰	63 (3%)	93 (4%)	150 (6%)	138%

Chart 2. Women and Landownership in Western Massachusetts 1800-1850. From U.S. Census and town tax records.

Western Massachusetts' population grew even after migration westward began.

By 1850, most Berkshire County wills listed heirs in New York, Ohio, or Michigan,

¹⁸ Censuses for 1800 & 1820 used ages 16 & 26 as dividing points in their categories. I used age 26 because in New England it was closer to the age of marriageability than 16.

¹⁹ Ratio of age 20-70 men to women in 1850. I was unwilling to spend the hours necessary to manually tabulate the number of males and females age 26+ for each of the sample towns. Ratios based on census abstracts are included in the chapter on demographics.

²⁰ N.B. The 1850 total does not include women landowners for Northampton (no tax lists available), or Stockbridge (no list for 1850 but 22 female landowners in 1860). Both towns in other years appeared unusually hospitable to women's landownership. If those towns' female landowners increased at the same rate as the rest of the sample from 1820 to 1850, the total would have been at least 183, instead of 150.

with California, Wisconsin and Indiana added by 1860, so part of the population was on the move. In spite of outmigration, western Massachusetts counties' population nearly doubled from 1800 to 1850.

In addition to population growth, the number and percentage of women landowners also increased. The Massachusetts tax valuation list for 1771 showed that only 1.7% of the taxable estates (26/1463) were owned by women in six of the sample towns plus four other nearby towns that had been incorporated by 1771.²¹ That should be seen as the baseline from which women's landownership increased.²²

²¹ Bettye Hobbs Pruitt, Massachusetts Tax Valuation List for 1771 (Boston, 1978). Towns include Northampton, 6 women landowners; Blandford, 2; Stockbridge, 1; Sheffield, 3; Deerfield, 3; and Ashfield, 0; which equal 15 of 917 or 1.6% of taxable estates. Adding New Marlborough, 3; Egremont, 4; Sandisfield, 2; and Williamstown, 2; brings the number up to 26/1463, or 1.7% of taxable estates.

²² N.B. The number of women in some categories studied is low -- a small fraction of the population. Taken together, however, the number of independent women -- property owners, businesswomen, singlewomen, widows, women farmers -- would have been substantial enough that every girl growing up would have seen several examples of independent women as what we would today call role models. Though they would have still been a minority among women, their resistance to the accepted societal norm of feminine dependency would have made them significant far beyond their numbers. Their resistance offered an alternative to women who sought to increase their autonomy. It is important to remember that nineteenth-century women had options in addition to marriage, and a number of those options will be explored here.

CHAPTER 2

DEMOGRAPHICS OF FEMALE PROPERTY OWNERS

To establish a baseline for comparison from 1800 to 1860, western Massachusetts' sample towns' female property owners and heads-of-households, as well as wills, were assessed to determine whatever patterns might exist. Though certain assumptions are generally made about characteristics of male taxpayers and heads-of-households in hilltowns (subsistence farmers on marginal land) or valley towns (prosperous farmers or mill owners, often with investment capital and nonpersisting unpropertied employees) or county seats (prosperous farmers, industrialists, and commercial interests with satellite businesses and the unpropertied labor force necessary to sustain them) those assumptions do not necessarily apply to women who were taxpayers and/or heads-of-households in the same towns.

Female property owners in western Massachusetts showed a much greater variety of demographic patterns in their households than did male property owners. They were more likely to be single, whether widows or "singlewomen," as they called themselves. Male heads-of-households were unlikely to live without an adult woman in the home, whereas female heads-of-households only occasionally boarded a male over the age of 16. The household gender pattern is one of the striking and unexpected results of analyzing western Massachusetts' sample towns' census records. Less surprising was the finding that women property owners controlled much less property, on average, than did their townsmen. Furthermore, propertied females persisted even at very low levels of ownership.

Marital Status

Using local tax assessors' records in combination with census lists and probate records, it was possible to sketch an outline of the "typical" female western Massachusetts property owner or head of household and watch her change over the decades from 1800 to 1860. Women property owners fit the general stereotype of the nineteenth century widow, an older woman without substantial assets, usually in the bottom half of her community's property hierarchy. Occasionally she was a single woman, and rarely, a married woman. In some towns, assessors routinely included a title for most taxpaying women; in the towns where the assessors were so thoughtful, 67% (143 of the total of 215 women listed) had "Wd," "Wid" or "Wdo" written before their names. Some other women who actually were widows were not listed as such, but it can be safely said that at least two-thirds of female property owners were widows. Because few women on tax assessors' lists wrote wills in the nineteenth century, it can be inferred that such landowners were being taxed on a dower share (usually lifetime use of a third) of their late husbands' estates, for which the widow did not have to write a will because the property distribution of her dower share had already been arranged by her husband's will. Testation rates for males were notoriously low, rarely reaching 50% and more often around 20%,²³ and women's rates were necessarily lower (for reasons that will be outlined in the chapter on property law) so the picture wills provide of women landowners is only a snapshot.

²³ Lois Green Carr, "Inheritance in the Colonial Chesapeake," Women in the American Revolution (Charlottesville, VA: U.S. Capitol Historical Society, 1989), pp.198-199.

The following chart shows the distribution by marital status of Berkshire County women who wrote wills from 1780 to 1860.

Chart 3. Marital Status of Female Berkshire County Testators²⁴

Widows	91	26%
Probable widows	109	31%
Singlewomen	86	25%
Married women	17	5%
Marital status undetermined	38	11%
Total	341	

Chart 3. Marital Status of Female Berkshire County Testators.
From probate records.

The marital status of most female testators was determined from the text of their wills or from other probate documents. Of 341 Berkshire County women who wrote wills, 91 were widows and 109 others were probably widows (women with different surnames than their parents or brothers and/or having multiple children). Eighty-six were single women (self-identified as "singlewoman" or with same surname as brother or parents); 17 were married when they wrote wills.

Type of Property Owned

Most women who had taxable property of any sort, according to assessors' lists, owned real estate. Of women who wrote wills, however, only 26% (87/341)

²⁴ Berkshire County Probate Records: 1780-1860; Family Court, Registry of Deeds, Pittsfield, MA (hereafter BCP).

owned land.²⁵ As the century passed, there was an increasing tendency for women to have securities rather than real estate, though the majority of propertied women owned realty rather than personalty. In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, only three Berkshire County women bequeathed notes they held as creditors. From 1840 to 1859, however, 49 women bequeathed notes and/or bank or railroad stocks. Either testators were becoming generally more prosperous, or women were diversifying their investments, or both. Perhaps they shifted investments from land to securities as the former became more expensive and the latter more widely available.

Race

Few female landowners were women of color. Former slave Elizabeth Freeman (Mum Bett) of Stockbridge in the 1820s with an undocumented amount of real estate, Lucretia Fothergill Youngs of Pittsfield, with \$1000 in real estate 1850 to 1860, and Abigail Johnson of Sheffield with \$100 realty in 1850 were identifiable as black or mulatto through census records and local history. Jemima Richmond of eastern Pittsfield was identified as "part" Indian by the Richmond family genealogy.²⁶

Elizabeth Freeman was famous for establishing her right to freedom. Abused by her mistress Hannah Hoggeboom Ashley ("a shrew untamable," according to

²⁵ BCP. This includes wills with inventoried land plus wills referring to real estate even though there was no inventory in the file.

²⁶ Joshua Bailey Richmond, The Richmond Family (Boston: 1897), pp. 126 & 269; Pittsfield Vital Records (hereafter PVR), microfilm at Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield, MA (henceforth BA).

Catherine Sedgwick) in 1781, Bett left the Ashleys and sought sanctuary at attorney Theodore Sedgwick's home in Sheffield. Having lived with the Ashleys and attended Colonel John Ashley at meetings where the new state constitution was being discussed, the illiterate Bett was able to eloquently argue the concept of personal freedom, saying that she learned such things "by keepin' still and mindin' things." Sedgwick agreed to take her case before the court. Though Hannah Ashley demanded Bett's return, her husband refused to retrieve his "property." As a married woman, Hannah could not bring suit to retrieve Bett without her husband's cooperation, so Bett's freedom was officially declared by the court in August 1781.²⁷ Thereafter she



Illustration 2. Elizabeth Freeman.
(Courtesy of Trustees of Reservations)

took the name Elizabeth Freeman and worked for the Sedgwick family. Though she was never wealthy, her autonomy increased exponentially as she moved from slave to property owner.

Some towns' tax lists included a separate list under the heading of "Negroes," as did Pittsfield in 1820. On that list,

²⁷ Arthur C. Chase, The Ashleys: A Pioneer Family (Beverly, MA: Massachusetts Trustees of Reservations, n.d.), pp. 21-26. Portrait of Elizabeth Freeman in private collection; photo courtesy of Trustees of Reservations.

there were no African-American women property owners in Pittsfield (one of the most populous towns in the sample) in 1820. Of the twenty men on the Negro list, seven owned real estate (two of them also owning taxable personal estate), and three more men owned taxable personal estate as well. Comparing landed Africans-Americans to total landowners ($7/306 = 2.3\%$) shows that just over two percent of landowners in Pittsfield in 1820 were black, while 5.3% ($147/2768$) of the population was black.²⁸ What this snapshot shows is that Pittsfield's black men owned real estate at a rate near that of white women ($10/306$ or 3.3%), while black women owned none. Though the sample is too small to be definitive, gender apparently provided a slight advantage for black men in reaching landed status. For black women, laboring under the burden of both gender and race, there was little possibility of attaining landownership in 1820.

Age

The age distribution for the Western Massachusetts sample towns' women property owners and heads of households in 1850 can be seen in the following chart:

²⁸ Pittsfield Taxes 1820: Pittsfield Tax Records 1819-1824, Pittsfield Bicentennial Commission microfilm, BA; Jesse Chickering, A Statistical View of the Population of Massachusetts, from 1765 to 1840 (Boston: Little & Brown, 1846), pp. 47 & 118.

Chart 4. Age of Female Landowners and Heads-of-Households²⁹

Age	Female HOHs		Female Landowners		U.S. White Women
	(376)	n %	(67)	n %	
20s	23	6%	3	4%	19%
30s	59	16%	7	10%	12%
40s	90	24%	15	22%	8%
50s	88	23%	16	24%	5%
60s	61	16%	12	18%	3%
70s+	55	15%	15	22%	<2%

Chart 4. Age of Female Landowners and Heads-of-Households. 1850 U.S. Census.

Women's landownership rates per decade of age peaked at age 40-60 -- the same years during which male landowners maximized their ownership after several decades of asset accumulation, and before they passed the bulk of their estate on to their children. Whether women landowners were widows or not, it is logical that they would achieve ownership in their forties to sixties, whether because that was the pattern followed by the men to whom they had been married or because they were single working women who had had several decades to accumulate assets just as men did, or because they had inherited property.

Early in the nineteenth century, slightly more than half (38 of 73 or 52% in 1800; 75 of 139 or 54% in 1820) of the households headed by women contained at

²⁹ Heads-of-households were from all towns in the sample. Landowners did not include 1850-1860 Stockbridge, Northampton, Goshen and Granby. In 1850 376 female heads-of-households and 67 female landowners' ages were ascertainable from the census. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

least one woman over age 45. Most female-headed households included minor children, which fits the profile of middle-aged widowhood. The other types of female-headed households were the older woman living alone, or two women living together. In some cases, cohabiting women were sisters. The Arms sisters' household in Deerfield included for a time the widowed mother and three sisters. The Blandford household known as "the Brown sisters" included Sarah and Jane Brown and their widowed sister, Hannah Brown Clark. The "Shaw girls," the Misses Stella and Sarah, were property owners in Plainfield. Emeline and Happytonia Stevens with their mother Sophia Moseley Stevens constituted another such household in Pittsfield. Most of these women were middle-aged, so they were not in the "pre-married" twenties.³⁰ On the contrary, they were women who had banded together with their like-minded sisters and daughters to form households exclusive of males.

Landless female heads-of-households' ages were lower in milltowns and their household profiles also differed in manufacturing towns. In the smaller agricultural towns, there were few if any households consisting primarily of young women, whereas in manufacturing towns, there were youngish exclusively-female households, (usually headed by a middle-aged woman) which, when the 1860 census is consulted, consisted primarily of factory operatives and women in the needle trades. Harriet Curtis, 58, of Pittsfield lived with her two daughters, who were paper mill operatives. Frances Kendall, 28, a dressmaker, headed a household of four females.

³⁰ George Sheldon, History of Deerfield, Massachusetts v. , p. ; Clara E. Hudson, Plain Tales from Plainfield, or, The Way Things Used to Be (Northampton, MA: 1962), p. 24; Blandford Assessors' List; Obituary, "Mrs. Reuben D. Wollison," The Berkshire Hills (Feb. 1902), p. 217; U.S. Census, Deerfield, Blandford, Pittsfield.

Singlehood in Massachusetts

Ratio of Males to Females

Women outnumbered men in New England in the mid-nineteenth century, but in western Massachusetts the disparity was not enough to serve as an explanation for the fifteen percent of women who remained unmarried. The following chart shows the ratio of adult males to females in Massachusetts in 1850.

Chart 5. Ratio of Massachusetts' Adult Females to Males, 1850³¹

Age	Females : Males
20-30	106 : 100
30-40	96 : 100
40-50	100 : 100
50-60	110 : 100
60-70	118 : 100

Chart 5. Ratio of Massachusetts' Adult Males to Females, 1850.

Western Massachusetts women did not vastly outnumber men. There certainly was not a sufficient "surplus" of women to explain why they remained single.

Women in their thirties were outnumbered by men of the same age, so if the women's goal in life was to marry, there were candidates available; enough men remained after westward migration in the 1840s to have satisfied the local demand for husbands.

Even at its least favorable, the ratio of women to men cannot account for the high

³¹ J.D.B. DeBow, Statistical View of the United States (New York: Gordon & Breach 1970 reprint of 1854 ed.), p. 56.

percentage of native-born never-married women in Massachusetts, which was generally double that of the national percentages: 14.6 compared to 7.3% nationwide in the 1830s and 16.9 compared to 7.7% nationally in 1850.³² One Massachusetts authoress, writing a book for young women aged fifteen to twenty, noted that "there is a fair chance of every woman's being married, who wishes it."³³ Thus if Massachusetts women wished to marry, they probably could have, had they been satisfied with the prospects marriage offered.³⁴

Susan Baker was a case in point. She was a Lanesborough innkeeper, having learned the business of the Baker tavern from her father. Running the inn as a stage stop, she was known as one of the best cooks on the road from Boston to Albany. The minister of St. Luke's Episcopal Church described her as "a very intelligent woman, but somewhat odd." Odd she may have been, but perhaps she thought she

³² Peter R. Uhlenberg, "A Study of Cohort Life Cycles: Cohorts of Native Born Massachusetts Women, 1830-1920," Population Studies 23 (1969), p. 420, cited in Lee V. Chambers-Schiller, Liberty, A Better Husband, Single Women in America: The Generations of 1780-1840 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 5.

Suzanne Lebsock found that in nineteenth century Petersburg, Virginia, the proportion of widows and spinsters grew just as it did in Massachusetts. In 1860, more than one-third of the women in Petersburg were widowed or never married. White women's refusal to marry or remarry was not just a New England phenomenon. Suzanne Lebsock, Free Women of Petersburg (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984), p. 116.

³³ Eliza Ware Rotch (Mrs. John) Farrar, The Young Lady's Friend (New York: 1860 revision of Boston: 1853 edition), pp. 18, 260.

³⁴ Farrar and others stressed the theme that "no union, but the most perfect one, is at all desirable." (p. 258) Of the biographies, autobiographies and journals read for this thesis, some women -- including as diverse a pair as Rebecca Dickinson of Hatfield and Catherine Sedgwick of Lenox, Stockbridge and New York -- who remained unmarried made it clear that they would have preferred the married state. In her youth, Sedgwick had been engaged to Harmann Bleecker, the law partner of her brother Theodore, but the engagement was broken off when Bleecker realized he could not live up to the "exalted sentiments" Sedgwick depicted in her romantic novels. ("Catharine Sedgwick's Love," Pittsfield Sun, June 21, 1876, p.1.)

recognized a fortunehunter when she saw one. Nearing eighty, Baker was courted by Capt. John M. Brown of Cheshire, a mere stripling of 70. Rumor suggested his attention was fixed not on Miss Baker, but on her acreage. Baker spurned Brown. The irritated Capt. Brown chiseled this inscription on a rock in his pasture:

Capt. John M. Brown born at Stafford's Hill, Cheshire, Mass., Oct. the 1st, 1808, inscribed upon this rock April the 2d, 1878. May God bless Susan and all her barren land and when she gets to heaven I hope she will find a man.³⁵

Capt. Brown may have realized that nothing less than perfection would have satisfied Susan Baker. Though Baker had the opportunity to marry, she chose to remain single. It is likely that she, a prosperous, hardworking innkeeper and good cook, with a successful business, had earlier suitors who did not chisel their rejections in stone. Though the male-female ratio in Lanesborough favored males when Baker arrived at marriageable age as well as when she was older, a single woman with assets attracted the attention of the fellows. Having the opportunity for marriage, however, did not mean a Massachusetts woman would choose to marry.

Education

There were factors other than an unfavorable gender ratio which might have contributed to Massachusetts' high percentage of never-married women: Massachusetts women had a better chance to become educated than did women in most other states. In 1647, the Massachusetts General Court passed the first

³⁵ U.S. Census, 1850, 1860; Lanesborough Assessors' Valuation Lists, 1849-1851 and 1859-1860; C.S. Hayward, "Rev. Charles J. Palmer Retires After 63 Years as Berkshire County Missionary," Springfield Sunday Union and Republican, September 5, 1943.

education law in America, the Old Deluder Satan Act, which required every town of a hundred or more families to maintain a grammar school, to ensure that children would be able to read the Bible.³⁶ Through the eighteenth century, tithingmen in each community made sure every family educated their children to basic literacy. In 1850, Massachusetts was third among the states in spending on public schools, but had a higher per-student outlay than any other state. Massachusetts spent more on public schools per person under age 20 than did other states, and spent two to three times the amount of any other New England state, with a total near the two larger and more populous states, New York and Pennsylvania.³⁷ In 1850, 23% of Massachusetts youngsters under age 20 were females in school. Only Ohio, New York and Pennsylvania surpassed Massachusetts in that percentage.³⁸

In addition, Massachusetts women had access to more periodicals and newspapers than was the norm. Had all Massachusetts-published issues been confined within the state, each household would have had 336 copies of newspapers and periodicals in 1850. Though Massachusetts supplied other states as well, the fact remains that there was a high rate of publications per capita -- roughly fifty percent higher than the two closest runners, New York and Pennsylvania. Finally, tiny Massachusetts produced the most scientific publications and was third in political publications.³⁹ There was a lot of thinking, writing, and publishing in Massachusetts

³⁶ Sarah Grimké, Letters on the Equality of the Sexes (1838), p. 110 fn.

³⁷ DeBow, 45, 63, 145.

³⁸ DeBow, 144, 51.

³⁹ DeBow, 99, 155-157.

in the mid-nineteenth century, and not only did the state's educated women read -- and teach -- they also published. Perhaps Massachusetts women had more information, from a wider variety of sources, to influence them to remain single, than did women in other states.

Certainly western Massachusetts women were literate. A survey of women who wrote wills in Berkshire County from 1810 to 1860 showed the following literacy rates, if literacy can be justifiably defined as the ability to sign one's own name.

Chart 6. Literacy of Female Testators, Berkshire County

	Female Testators	Made Marks	% "Literate"
1810s	18	10	44 % ⁴⁰
1820s	23	7	70 %
1830s	60	8	87 %
1840s	75	21	72 %
1850s	129	14	89 %

Chart 6. Literacy of Female Testators, Berkshire County. From 326 women's wills, 1810-1860.

Though the early samples are small, literacy rose as the century progressed, and women's literacy, after changing little from 1760 to 1810⁴¹, roughly doubled from 1810 to 1860. More women were able to read during the decades when women

⁴⁰ This is close to the 45% Lockridge measured for rural New England women 1787-1795. Kenneth A. Lockridge, Literacy in Colonial New England (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974), p. 40. Of the 124 Berkshire County men's wills read, only 4 men (3.2%) signed with a mark (1800-1860).

⁴¹ Lockridge, Literacy, 38-39.

began to be described as "restless," than had been able to read during previous years when women were supposedly more content.⁴² A Scottish phrenologist, George Combe, who traveled through America from 1838 to 1840, commented on education in the states he visited. Though not especially impressed with schooling in Massachusetts, he found it to be better than other states'.⁴³ Massachusetts women had a reputation for education and independent thought by the mid-nineteenth century. Caroline Dall reported a comment by a miner west of Lake Huron, who said, "I always know a Boston woman . . . she always has Margaret Fuller's stamp upon her" ⁴⁴ Women in Massachusetts' mill boarding houses were a good example of women who thought and talked and educated themselves in groups while enjoying an autonomy that, though limited by mill owners' paternalism, was greater than that of their farm-bound sisters or mothers.⁴⁵

Patterns of Settlement

Massachusetts was, furthermore, more densely settled than much of New York and Pennsylvania, with about half the state showing a population density of 90 or

⁴² See William R. Taylor and Christopher Lasch, "Two 'Kindred Spirits': Sorority and Family in New England, 1839-1846," New England Quarterly 36 (1963): 23-41 for consideration of women's restlessness beginning in the 1830s and 1840s. I would suggest, in light of more recent scholarship, that women were restless as early as the 1780s, to judge from their literature, diaries and correspondence.

⁴³ Elisabeth Anthony Dexter, Career Women of America, 1776-1840, (Clifton, NJ: Augustus M. Kelley, 1972 reprint of Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950 edition), pp. 7-8.

⁴⁴ Caroline H. Dall, The College, The Market, and The Court (New York: Arno Press, 1972 reprint of Boston: 1867 ed.), p. 116.

⁴⁵ For examples of mill women's self-education and comparative autonomy, see Thomas Dublin, Women at Work (1979) and Farm to Factory (1981).

more people per square mile, while less than a quarter of Pennsylvania and even less of New York were so densely settled. Massachusetts women had more women within shouting distance for mutual aid and comfort.⁴⁶

Social Activism

Finally, the issues of abolition and temperance gave women a chance to assemble and to see other women in new leadership roles outside the home -- a step toward independence and autonomy -- and women determined to maintain their autonomy may have chosen to remain unmarried. Both temperance and abolition were hot topics in Massachusetts by the mid-nineteenth century, particularly because early abolitionists such as the Grimké sisters compared the position of married women to that of slaves, and because temperance was a "women's issue," due to the high correlation between alcohol abuse and domestic violence.⁴⁷ Women therefore

⁴⁶ Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census [1860] (Washington: Department of the Interior Census Office, 1883), endleaf. Those who are skeptical about what it meant to a woman to have other women to talk to should read the numerous accounts by women who settled the prairies or traveled the Oregon Trail in the 1840s and 1850s. See Carol Fairbanks & Sarah Brooks Sundberg, Farm Women on the Prairie Frontier (1983), John Faragher, Women and Men on the Overland Trail (1979), Fred Lockley, Conversations with Pioneer Women (1981), Juliette McGill Kinzie, Wau-Bun: The "Early Day" in the North-West (1992 reprint of 1856 ed.), Glenda Riley, The Female Frontier (1988), and Peggy Pascoe, "Western Women at the Cultural Crossroads," Trails Toward a New Western History, Patricia Nelson Limerick et. al. eds. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), p. 41.

⁴⁷ See Sarah Grimké, Letters on the Equality of the Sexes (1838). By the 1870s, suffragists were using the "home protection" argument for prohibition (along with the argument that men would never pass anti-alcohol laws on their own) to make women's suffrage appear to be merely an extension of women's domestic sphere. Nancy Grey Osterud, Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 254 n. 6.

protected themselves in several ways by remaining unmarried, as documented by what Massachusetts women wrote and read.

CHAPTER 3

QUESTIONING MARRIAGE AS A DESIRABLE STATE

What Women Wrote and Read

The casual reader may ask, "But what does reading have to do with remaining single?" In addition to singlehood, one way of measuring women's opinion of marriage, or more specifically, measuring their hesitation to marry or remarry in widowhood, is to consider what they wrote and what they read which presented marriage in a negative light. There was considerable discussion in journals, literature and letters on the subject of marriage as detrimental to women. The sheer volume of evidence in print -- much of it written by Massachusetts women -- shows that the subject was marketable. Many women who considered a good marriage to be the most desirable state for a woman chose themselves to remain single. They had seen disastrous marriages in their own families or among friends and neighbors. An overview of popular literature illustrates their dilemma.

Susanna Haswell Rowson's best-selling "seduced-and-abandoned" tale, Charlotte Temple, was first published in the United States in 1794 and is still in print after nearly 200 editions. It has been described as "read by more persons than any other volume of fiction ever printed in this country." Based on a true story, it captured the hearts of several generations of American women.⁴⁸ The doughty Mrs. Rowson, burdened with a hard-drinking husband and penury, supported herself by

⁴⁸ Dorothy Weil, In Defense of Women: Susanna Rowson (1762-1824) (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), pp. 1, 5.

writing, acting, and establishing a boarding school for young ladies, like other women whose husbands or fathers turned out to be poor providers. Mrs. Rowson's boarding school, located in the Boston area for close to two decades, undoubtedly impressed a generation of schoolgirls with the notion that marriage was a chancy endeavor and sweet-talking men the bane of woman's existence.⁴⁹

The sequel, Charlotte's Daughter, showed how things could go from bad to worse for the unwary woman. Mary Lumly was a woman "foolish enough to surrender not only her body but [also] her property to a man." Though her guardian wanted to negotiate a property settlement for her, she said, "When I make him master of my person, I shall also give him my property, and I trust he is of too generous a disposition ever to abuse my confidence." She was, of course, not only seduced and abandoned, but robbed in the bargain.⁵⁰ Mrs. Rowson warned women to beware of men as early as 1786, when she published the poem "To Anna:"

Be circumspect, be cautious then,
Beware of all, but most of men.
For they will study to betray,
And make our helpless sex, their prey,
From virtue's bright, refulgent, throne,
With baleful hand, will drag you down.
Dishonor first, then leave to mourn
Those blessings, which can ne'er return.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Susanna Haswell Rowson, Charlotte Temple, Cathy N. Davidson, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. xxxx, 12.

⁵⁰ Weil, 60.

⁵¹ Weil, 43.

Her cautionary words may have found a receptive audience in the girls she taught. They could see for themselves who was supporting whom in the Rowson family.

In 1798, Alcuin was published, with its indictment of the married state for women. Cleverly framed as conversation between a guest and his hostess, this work of fiction was published as a ladies' book. The publishers understood their market well enough to bet that the book would sell.⁵²

In 1807 a ballad, "The Happy Woman" recommended against marriage:

How happy is the maid
Whose fortune it has been
To keep a proper distance from
That paltry creature man: ...
Whose parsimonious soul
Craves profit from the needle
And gives the wheel's detested din
The preference to the fiddle.⁵³

By the time "The Happy Woman" was published, some women were fed up with their position as profit-makers for husbands to whom wives' property legally belonged. The generation of young rural women who would later staff the Lowell mills may have grown up with the words of such songs ringing in their ears. They intended to live their lives differently than their mothers -- and many succeeded. They increased their independence by earning their own pay and increased their autonomy within marriage by marrying younger men than was traditional for farmers' daughters. As Atlantic Monthly pointed out in 1858, farmers' daughters married nonfarmers because

⁵² Charles Brockden Brown, Alcuin: A Dialogue (Grossman 1971 reprint of 1798 ed.)

⁵³ Christopher Clark, The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 133.

"They remember their worn-out mothers."⁵⁴ Women who chose not to marry at all may have consciously decided to live more independently than their mothers had been allowed as married women.

In 1810, The Emerald published "What Happy creatures old Maids are:"

How smoothly she glides down the current of life;
No one to control her, she has her own way,
While the girl who submits to be hail'd as a wife,
Is bound by her honor to love and obey.⁵⁵

Massachusetts women not only read, they also expressed their opinions in the public media, as well as to each other in letters and recorded for posterity in journals.

In the 1790s, Judith Sargent Murray wrote a series of articles for Massachusetts Magazine to stress the need for girls to prepare for an independent future. Rather than preparing a young girl only for marriage, she maintained that "marriage should not be presented as their *summum bonum*, or as a certain, or even necessary event; they should learn to respect a single life, and even regard it as the *most eligible*, except a warm, mutual and judicious attachment had gained the ascendancy in the bosom." In arguing for increased independence for women, she pointed out that if females were adequately educated, they would be capable of supporting themselves, and furthermore, if women were educated to the same degree as men, "the term, *helpless widow*, might be rendered as infrequent and inapplicable

⁵⁴ Thomas Dublin, Women At Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), p. 55.

⁵⁵ Chambers-Schiller, 18 & 36.

as that of *helpless widower*."⁵⁶ Education was thus tied to independence for women before the nineteenth century.

In 1794, Massachusetts Magazine published this anonymous poem which suggested women's motives for not marrying:

No ties shall perplex me, no fetters shall bind,
The innocent freedom that dwells in my mind.
At liberty's spring such draughts I've imbib'd,
That I hate all the doctrines by wedlock prescrib'd . . .⁵⁷

"Doctrine" was a good choice of words, because laws subjugating married women were based on the weakness of Eve. "Liberty's spring," suggests Revolutionary War ideology, which would be invoked repeatedly by women's rights lecturers who pointed out that women did not enjoy the right to life (when a woman "has never consented to laws which may deprive her of it,"), liberty (because a woman's person is given into the custody of the man she marries,) or the pursuit of happiness (because a married woman is deprived of the custody of her own person, the guardianship of her children, and the right to control her own property).⁵⁸

Even women who expected to marry were stung by the difference in status which prohibited a woman from acting for herself and restricted her to the reactive role, proscribed from doing more than accepting or rejecting a suitor. In 1800, teenager Eliza Southgate pointed out that though she did not consider marriage essential to happiness, "The inequality of privilege between the sexes is very sensibly

⁵⁶ Mary Beth Norton, Liberty's Daughters (HarperCollins, 1980), p. 254.

⁵⁷ Norton, 242.

⁵⁸ Caroline Dall, Woman's Rights Under the Law (Boston: 1861), pp. 139-140.

felt by us females, and in no instance is it greater than in the liberty of choosing a partner in marriage; true we have the liberty of refusing those we don't like, but not of selecting those we do." Eliza had attended Mrs. Rowson's school in Boston in 1798 and thought Rowson "one of the blessings of creation," writing her sister Octavia that "no woman was ever better calculated to govern a school." Eliza had read Mary Wollstonecraft, who "said many things which I cannot but approve, yet the foundation on which she builds her work will be apt to prejudice us so against her that we will not allow her the merit she really deserves."⁵⁹ Such qualified support was typical of women who commented on Wollstonecraft's work, considered so incendiary that it merited commentary by a number of Massachusetts women.

Wollstonecraft's convoluted Vindication of the Rights of Woman with its spiralling argument advocating education for women had been first published in 1792. A blizzard of invective swept over her soon after it was published. One contemporary called Wollstonecraft a "hyena in petticoats." Her notoriety doubtless affected the spirit in which her work was read, but her comments on marriage for money as legalized prostitution were echoed by following generations of feminists as well as middle class women with no pretensions to feminism. They took to heart her argument that women were educated for dependence and not taught the mental discipline required of better-educated males.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Eliza Southgate Bowne, A Girl's Life Eighty Years Ago (Williamstown, MA: Corner House Publishers, 1980), pp. 31, 38, 61.

⁶⁰ Mary Wollstonecraft, Vindication of the Rights of Woman (New York: Viking, 1985 reprint of 1792 ed.), pp. 7-8, 86-87, 103, 105, 126, 135, 142-143, 155, 157, 221.

Wollstonecraft's fiction was a less threatening package of the same ideas. In the posthumously-published Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman, Wollstonecraft described a woman whose fortune-hunting husband imprisoned her within their house and committed her to an insane asylum.⁶¹ Pointing out that "over their mutual fortune she has no power, it must all pass through his hands," Wollstonecraft made the point that under English common law, a married woman's finances as well as her person were completely under the power of her husband.

In real life, the single Wollstonecraft had financially supported her "passionate and thriftless father who spent more than three daughters could earn, and whom she nevertheless protected to her dying day." Caroline Dall, speaking to a Boston audience in midcentury, concluded that his example "did not give [Wollstonecraft] a very high idea of the security of such dependence" of a woman on a man.⁶² For many women, dependence on a husband was a double bind: the man unable to make a living was empowered to dispose of his wife's income. Thus the hardworking woman's money could be frittered away by the man legally entrusted with preserving family assets. Massachusetts' early lawmakers had not fortified the legal code against such scoundrels, trusting that the church-state would protect the family as the Puritans intended it to do. But Puritan social mores, including community censure of the inebriate, had given way to Yankee individualism.

⁶¹ Mary Wollstonecraft, Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman (New York: W.W. Norton, 1975 reprint of 1798 ed.), p. 102.

⁶² Dall, Woman's Rights, 157.

In another "story within the story," Maria's landlady told her story of a philandering husband who ran into debt to buy fine clothes for "an impudent slut," even agreeing to have his wife's furniture auctioned to pay creditors.⁶³ This example would also be echoed by generations of women's rights activists who remembered to point out that working women as well as heiresses were harmed by marriage to the wrong man. Whether fiction stirred women's resentment of real-life injustices, or women's resentment created an audience for tales of the same, is irrelevant. Fiction was no more bizarre than some women's real-life experiences -- but the publication of such stories gave women an opportunity to openly discuss what had previously remained personal business.

Women did discuss alternatives to marital arrangements that made them less than what they wanted to be. As Phyllis Cole points out, the single Mary Moody Emerson chose a life that was "both celibate and androgynous." Having rejected a suitor along with the institution of marriage in 1807, she went on to celebrate her celibacy as a "self-declaration [rather] than a self-denial," according to Cole. Comparing herself to "low timid females or vulgar domestics," Emerson wrote in 1817 that married women lost their "moral grandeur" and "holy independence" and praised God for allowing her "to see the advantage of loneliness." Her search for a spiritually satisfying life led her to reject marriage as an unfulfilling prospect.⁶⁴

⁶³ Wollstonecraft, Maria, 127.

⁶⁴ Phyllis Cole, "The Advantage of Loneliness: Mary Moody Emerson's Almanacks, 1802-1855," Emerson, Prospect and Retrospect, Joel Porte, ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 15 & 10.

In their memoirs, some Massachusetts women reminisced about the happily independent and contented old maids in their families. Caroline Clapp Briggs of Northampton, a conventional wife and mother, noted that her Conway cousin Katy Catlin was "a fine specimen of New England old maidenhood, merry and gay Merriment was an unusual gift in women of those days, who were generally overworked and anxious. She had only herself to care for, and she found plenty of time to eat, drink and be merry with her friends."⁶⁵ Mrs. Briggs, with her share of overwork and anxiety as a wife and mother, envied the freedom of her spinster cousin, whose independence exceeded Mrs. Briggs'.

In 1820 Eliza Chaplin of Salem wrote to a friend that she preferred to "remain in single blessedness," rather than risk marrying the wrong man and being fettered to him for life. Having seen too many unhappy marriages between ill-suited partners, she deemed it "felicity" to forego marriage.⁶⁶ This was a common sentiment among Massachusetts women who had learned from others' tragedies.

Other women of the early nineteenth century, reminiscing about their childhood days, recalled examples of abusive husbands with embattled wives and took to heart what they learned. Lucy Stone's lesson on women's rights -- or the lack thereof -- was courtesy of her neighbors, the Lambertons:

⁶⁵ Caroline [Clapp] Briggs, Reminiscences and Letters of Caroline Clapp Briggs, George S. Merriam, ed. (Boston: 1897), p. 15. Though this anecdote is undated, Caroline Clapp was born in 1822, so her childhood visits to Conway were probably in the late 1820s or 1830s. Katy or Katherine Catlin did not appear as a head-of-household in Conway in that period.

⁶⁶ Chambers-Schiller, 15.

The mother was an excellent woman, the father a blacksmith who got drunk and would go away and be gone a long time. Once when he had been away for weeks, and his wife was about to have a baby, her father drove over from Ware with a team, and took her and the children and the furniture, and took her home. Mr. Lamberton got wind of it, and was waiting at the door when Mr. Eaton arrived in Ware, and forbade him to unload the team, and he had to drive them back.⁶⁷

Many women cited such examples. Men married women, squandered their property, then left, sometimes returning years later to claim whatever property the "grass widow" had accumulated in the interim. Typically, other women would try to give assistance to a deserted wife. Stone's mother sent baskets of food to the blacksmith's family when he was away on a binge. Feeding a hungry wife and children was one example of the sisterhood practiced by women without the help or interference of men. Suzanne Lebsock suggests that perhaps there was real truth in the "true womanhood" ideal of women as morally superior to men. Perhaps "the cult of true womanhood carried the day in part," Lebsock argues, "because some of its claims conformed closely to observed female behavior."⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Andrea Moore Kerr, Lucy Stone: Speaking Out for Equality (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), p. 19.

⁶⁸ Suzanne Lebsock, Free Women of Petersburg (New York: Norton, 1984), pp. 143-144. Whether women were or were not "morally superior" is undocumentable; certainly the women who filled New England churches were not necessarily more moral than men. Women, however, did initiate many informal social services needed by hungry and ill-clad neighbors, did defend other women against abusive husbands, and did provide shelter to orphans and widows -- all of which fell within the domestic sphere. The exceptions, such as Hannah Hogeboom Ashley of Sheffield, who struck "Mum Bett" with a red-hot kitchen tool, was no paragon of virtue. (Chase, 21-23.)

To carry Lebsock's argument one step further: as long as Massachusetts men's work was on the farm and their behavior more generally under the surveillance of the women of their households, those women were able to exert an influence that benefitted society. But when men's work moved them into office and factory and beyond the sphere of women's watchfulness, their business faltered in its moral purpose of providing a competence for the family and became grounded instead in the very unPuritan values of greed and profit-making.

As early as 1837, Sarah Josepha Hale was writing in the influential Godey's Lady's Book about women's property rights:

The barbarous custom of wresting from a woman whatever she possesses, whether by inheritance, donation, or her own industry, and conferring it all upon the man she marries, to be used at his discretion and will, perhaps wasted on his wicked indulgences, without allowing her any control or redress, is such a monstrous perversion of *justice by law* that we might well marvel how it could obtain in a Christian community, if we did not take into account the force of habit in reconciling the mind to evils, injuries, and sufferings of every sort.⁶⁹

Hale went on to say that not every husband who lost his wife's property did so through intemperance and dissipation. She cited the case of "a really good-hearted man who married an heiress," and though he "would not willfully have wronged her," he went bankrupt then committed suicide.⁷⁰ Rather than have the reader think that married women's property rights would benefit only the wealthy, Hale said the most "disgusting" feature of the current law was how it worked on the poor. "Taking from the wife the poor earnings of her own hands, and giving them to waste as he pleases," Hale wrote, "encourages the worst propensities of a brutal husband, tyranny and injustice to his wife and family, intemperance, gambling and idleness in his own

For documentation of Puritans' views against greed and profiteering as expressed by William Bradford, John Cotton, John Winthrop, and others, see Bernard Bailyn's description of what happened when merchant Robert Keayne overcharged a customer for a bag of nails. The General Court fined him £200, and he was publicly admonished in church. As Bailyn pointed out, Keayne "had put the increase of his own wealth above the common good," which was a practice unacceptable in the City on a Hill. No one should be (to use William Bradford's term) "hoodwinckte." Bernard Bailyn, The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century (New York: Harper, 1955), pp. 20-23, 25, 41-44.

⁶⁹ Sarah Josepha Hale, "Rights of Married Women," Godey's Lady's Book 14 (May 1837), p. 212.

⁷⁰ Hale, 213.

person." Noting that a husband could "take all her furniture, even her clothing, and that of her children, and sell them, legally, for *rum*," Hale described a situation that to her did not apply to the genteel classes -- but which in fact was a problem without class boundaries. Intemperance and profligacy were problems of rich and poor alike. Whether a woman's money was inherited or earned, when it was gone, she could be left at the mercy of the town without an asset to call her own.⁷¹

During the late 1820s, Frances Wright lectured in New England, and in 1831 gave in Worcester a series of public lectures on abolition and women's rights, of which Lucy Stone of Brookfield no doubt heard. Wright's comment that the rising generation of daughters "are now condemned to walk in leading strings from the cradle to the altar, if not to the grave, taught to see in the other sex a race of seducers rather than protectors and of masters rather than companions," is evidence of the disparity in the expectations of women and those of men -- which Lucy Stone had seen in her own household. Stone read Sarah Grimké's Letters on the Equality of the Sexes in The Spectator in 1837 and knew that more than a thousand people had gathered in Worcester Congregational Church to hear the Grimkés speak. She was in church when the Congregational clergy issued the Brookfield Bull denouncing women lecturers. Stone's intemperate father had tyrannized her mother, showing her the

⁷¹ Hale, 213-214. In this passage, Hale seems to equate the use of rum with husbands of working women forced to support their families through their husbands' drunkenness. Whether Hale as a general rule equated rum with the working class, I could not fairly say without further reading of her columns. In this, however, she was evidently making a class judgment, and one which implied that the working class was more prone to inebriation than was the upper class.

folly of wedlock.⁷² It is not hard to see how Stone's experience provoked her to advocate for women's rights or influenced her to denounce marriage.

Stone, the first Massachusetts woman to receive a college degree, intended to remain single. She wrote to her brother, "I can tell you they [Sarah Grimké's articles in The Spectator] are first rate and only help to confirm the resolution I had made before, to call no man master." Stone's resolution held until Henry Blackwell determinedly wooed her. Though he did not bully her as her father had done her mother, her marriage to Blackwell turned out to be a textbook case of how an incompetent businessman could drain the resources of a prudent and thrifty wife with an income of her own. When Lucy Stone later said from the lecture platform that she knew men who had taken advantage of the law to squander their wives' property, she might have been thinking of her own case.⁷³ Other women were reluctant to marry for similar reasons. Though Stone did marry, it is doubtful whether she would have married if she had not been pursued by a suitor who was both persistent and willing to approach marriage on her terms rather than on traditional terms.

Sarah Grimké turned down marriage proposals because she feared losing her autonomy as well as the rights she had as a single woman. She wrote a survey of the legal disabilities of women, which was widely published in New England, in The Spectator, in The Liberator, and in her tract, Letters on the Equality of the Sexes. Writing from Concord in 1837, she included the scenarios described by other women.

⁷² Kerr, 19-25; Elizabeth Warbasse, The Changing Legal Rights of Married Women, 1800-1861 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987), pp. 88-89.

⁷³ Kerr, 9, 15, 19, 46, 100; Elizabeth Ann Bartlett, ed., Sarah Grimké, Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and Other Essays (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 4.

A man may spend the property he has acquired by marriage at the ale-house, the gambling table, or in any other way he pleases. Many instances of this kind have come to my knowledge; and women, who have brought their husbands handsome fortunes, have been left, in consequence of the wasteful and dissolute habits of their husbands, in straitened circumstances, and compelled to toil for the support of their families.⁷⁴

That message had maximum impact during the economic upheaval of the late 1830s.

Grimké went on to describe what could happen to a woman without a "handsome fortune," who was willing and able to work for a living.

All that she acquires by her industry is his; so that she cannot, with her own honest earnings, become the legal purchaser of any property. If she expends her money for articles of furniture, to contribute to the comfort of the family, they are liable to be seized for her husband's debts: and I know an instance of a woman, who by labor and economy had scraped together a little maintenance for herself and a do-little husband, who was left, at his death, by virtue of his last will and testament, to be supported by charity.⁷⁵

Grimké further described a woman whose provisions for her old age were thwarted by a husband unwilling to provide for her, who, with legal sanction, invaded her savings.

I knew another woman, who by great industry, had acquired a little money and deposited it in a bank for safe keeping. She had saved this pittance while able to work, in hopes that when age or sickness disqualified her for exertion, she might have something to render life comfortable, without being a burden to her friends. Her husband, a worthless, idle man, discovered this hid treasure, drew her little stock from the bank, and expended it all in extravagance and vicious indulgence.⁷⁶

Grimké went on to compare the laws governing married women with southern states' slave codes. "All that a slave possesses belongs to his master; he possesses nothing

⁷⁴ Sarah Grimké, 73.

⁷⁵ Sarah Grimké, 75.

⁷⁶ Sarah Grimké, 75.

of his own, except what his master chooses he should possess," Grimké wrote, adding, "By the marriage, the husband is absolutely master of the profits of the wife . . ." ⁷⁷ Unmarried female Massachusetts abolitionists may have taken Grimké's message to heart. Certainly the wide circulation of the combination of The Spectator, The Liberator, and the feminist tract guaranteed that many Massachusetts women were privy to Grimké's message.

Even authors who did not believe in political rights for women invoked examples of the "neglected and oppressed wife of the brutal inebriate." In her prescriptive work of 1843, Mrs. A.J. Graves asked

How many females have seen their own hard earnings, upon which their children depended for bread, seized upon by an intemperate husband, to be squandered in brutal excesses, without the power or right to withhold them from his grasp? ⁷⁸

Though Mrs. Graves advocated no political rights for women, she still favored property rights for married women, as a means of strengthening and protecting the family -- a necessity unforeseen by Massachusetts' Puritan forebears.

Margaret Fuller, born in Cambridgeport, Massachusetts in 1810, wrote sympathetically of the problems of married women in the 1840s, when she described scenes of "profligate and idle men [who] live upon the earnings of industrious wives." She had personal knowledge of such men, and described one of them:

⁷⁷ Grimké, 73-77.

⁷⁸ Mrs. A.J. Graves, Woman in America (New York: 1843), pp. 167, 178, 193.

I have seen the husband who had stained himself by a long course of low vice, till his wife was wearied from her heroic forgiveness, by finding that his treachery made it useless, and that if she would provide bread for herself and her children, she must be separate from his ill fame -- I have known this man come to install himself in the chamber of a woman who loathed him, and say she should never take food without his company.⁷⁹

Horace Greeley in his introduction to Fuller's Woman in the Nineteenth Century invoked the profligate husband with a rhetorical question of legislators:

[If you] suppose me [to be] a wife, and my husband a drunken prodigal -- what am I to do then? May I not earn food for my babes without being exposed to have it snatched from their mouths to replenish the rumseller's till, and aggravate my husband's madness? If some sympathizing relative sees fit to leave me a bequest wherewith to keep my little ones together, why may I not be legally enabled to secure this to their use and benefit?⁸⁰

Though Greeley did not support many of the goals of women's rights activists, he understood how property law, instead of protecting the family, actually protected the dissolute male determined to drink his family into the poorhouse.

Louisa May Alcott was another Massachusetts woman who worked outside the home in a series of jobs -- domestic servant, governess, schoolteacher, companion, seamstress, and actress -- and wrote to support herself and her family after years of indebtedness caused by her father's mismanagement of family finances. After growing up in a household "poor as rats," and seeing her mother forced to beg others for help, she chose to stay single. One 1852 journal entry sharply contrasted her indolent father to the industrious women of the family: "Father idle, mother at work

⁷⁹ Margaret Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971 reprint of 1855 Boston edition), p. 32.

⁸⁰ Horace Greeley, introduction to Margaret Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century (NY: W.W. Norton, 1971 reprint of 1855 Boston edition), 11-12.

in the [employment] office, Nan and I governessing, Lizzie in the kitchen . . ."

Alcott she was certain that she could support her mother better than her father had.

"I often think what a hard life she had had since she married," Alcott wrote. "My dream is to have a lovely, quiet home for her, with no debts or troubles to burden her." There was no mention of her father in her ideal household. Alcott even minimized the presence of men in her novels. In Work, she killed off her heroine's male love interest immediately after the wedding, leaving a household of congenial women which may have resembled many households headed by women. Alcott, like other literary women of her time, had also read Mary Wollstonecraft.⁸¹

Catharine Sedgwick, author of Married or Single, wrote of her sister's heroic endurance in a bad marriage.⁸² Though she ostensibly considered the marital state preferable for women, she, by remaining single and living in her brothers' households, followed a course of action like that of hundreds of women.

Mary Upton Ferrin, the woman who petitioned the Massachusetts legislature to protect married women's property, married a man who had been "of unimpeachable moral character," but within marriage was an intemperant tyrant who abused her until she could not live safely in his household. He even succeeded in having her, though

⁸¹ Louisa May Alcott, Journals of Louisa May Alcott (Boston: Little, Brown, 1989), pp. 6, 63, 65, 68.

⁸² Mary Kelley, "A Woman Alone: Catharine Maria Sedgwick's Spinsterhood in Nineteenth-Century America," New England Quarterly 51, #2 (June 1978), p. 213. See also footnote 32 on Sedgwick's broken engagement.

sane, committed to an asylum, as was Wollstonecraft's fictional Maria.⁸³ In Ferrin's 1850 address to the Massachusetts legislature's judiciary committee, she cited an example of a wealthy woman whose portion was frittered away by her husband:

⁸³ Elizabeth B. Warbasse, "Mary Upton Ferrin," Notable American Women 1607-1950 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 611-612.

Some battered wives received support of other women in their communities. An anecdote attributed to Sarah Snell Bryant described just such a situation in Plainfield. One Chris Colson was rumored to "be in the habit of beating his wife." Jane Robinson, an unmarried "amazon in strength and spirit, full-chested and large-armed," decided to end Colson's bad habit. At the annual regimental review of several towns' militia, before crowds of both sexes, "Jane Robinson headed a party of women, who took a rail from a fence, seized upon Colson, put him astride of it, held him on, carried him round the field, and dismissed him with an admonition to flog his wife no more." Related by William Cullen Bryant in his autobiography in Parke Godwin, A Biography of William Cullen Bryant, vol. 1 (New York: Appleton, 1883), pp. 7-8.

A very estimable and influential lady, whose property was valued at over \$150,000, married a man, in whom she had unbounded, but misplaced confidence, as is too often the case; consequently the most of her property was squandered through intemperance and dissipation, before she was aware of the least wrong-doing. So deeply was she shocked by the character of her husband, that she soon found a premature grave . . .⁸⁴

Ferrin described how an "uncommonly mean" man could reduce his wife to poverty.

A woman of a neighboring town, whose husband had forsaken her, hired a man to carry her furniture in a wagon to her native place, with her family, which consisted of her husband's mother, herself, and six children, the eldest of which was but twelve years old. On her arrival there, she had only food enough for one meal, and nine-pence left. During the summer, in consequence of hardships and deprivations, she was taken violently sick, being deprived of her reason for several weeks. Her husband had not as yet appeared to offer her the least assistance . . . But, being an uncommonly mean man, he had sold her furniture, piece by piece, and reduced her to penury, so that nothing but the aid of her friends and her own exertions, saved her and her family from the alms-house.⁸⁵

Even a conventional woman in a traditional marriage might not have considered marriage to be the preferred state for every woman in every circumstance. Abigail Brackett Lyman, who had grown up an innkeeper's daughter in Boston and married Major Erastus Lyman of Northampton, believed some marriages were ill-considered. "I believe my friend would prefer the single state," she wrote, "to such 'legal prostitution' as many seem ambitious to attain."⁸⁶ Feminists and nonfeminists alike derided marrying for money. For a woman however poor to trade control of her body for a comfortable living was a situation well known and widely criticized.

⁸⁴ Elizabeth Cady Stanton et. al., History of Woman Suffrage, v. 1 (1881), p. 213.

⁸⁵ Stanton et. al., 213-214.

⁸⁶ Helen Roelker Kessler, The Worlds of Abigail Brackett Lyman (Tufts University: Master's thesis, 1976), pp. 19, 227.

Mrs. A.J. Graves, author of Woman in America, described in her 1844 Girlhood and Womanhood: or, Sketches of My Schoolmates the marriages of several contemporaries. One unhappy woman expected too much of marriage and suffered bitter disappointment in a union with "a heartless libertine." "To neglect and desertion her husband added cruelty," Mrs. Graves wrote, "and at last denied her even the society of those who loved her," including that of her mother and friends. Another woman was reduced to beggary after her dissolute husband squandered his fortune and her inheritance. "Born in affluence, and blest with all that prosperity and indulgence could bestow, she died in an almshouse, the wretched victim of depravity and intemperance," Graves wrote. Sprinkled throughout the book are references to happy old maids. The narrator's determination to remain "in a state of single blessedness," her observation that some husbands "forget that the woman they have chosen is not a hireling," her friend's comment that "You do not know . . . how much you have escaped by remaining unmarried," the description of the faded former friend whose careworn features revealed her unhappiness in marriage -- all show the results of a bad marriage.⁸⁷ To judge from her sketches, Mrs. Graves had seen very few happy marriages. On the other hand, by 1844 the story of marital unhappiness may have been more popular than a story of happy marriage would have been. If the message had not had currency, it would not have appeared so often.

⁸⁷ Mrs. A.J. Graves, Girlhood and Womanhood: or, Sketches of My Schoolmates (Boston: 1844), pp. 53, 58-9, 61, 118, 132, 146, 151-2, 192, 208.

In Memories of a Grandmother, by a Lady of Massachusetts, Mrs. A.M.

Richards described how she came to penury. First, her physician husband proved unequal to the economic necessities of his practice.

With all our sanguine youth . . . and with our best management, we found that the practice of a new physician failed to meet expenses. My husband could not live by way of "barter;" else he might have been successful. He loved his profession ardently -- but he hated to present a bill! It seemed to him so uncourteous, after being consulted in confidence, to charge for it. So by the time the principle of the property left by his father was gone, it became indispensable for our interest that we should seek, in "other climes," that competency so slow in meeting us in our native land.⁸⁸

In St. Thomas, West Indies, her husband promptly died. She returned to Boston and remarried. When her second husband died, leaving her to support her children alone, her property was auctioned for debt. After recouping the loss, she lent out her savings for double interest -- and lost it all. At that point, "I commenced, with the education of my own, that of the daughters of other parents," Mrs. Richards wrote. Eventually she was able to purchase a small house with the proceeds of her teaching. As a single mother, she was economically more secure than she had been in either of two marriages -- an example contrary to conventional wisdom that all women were economically dependent on men.⁸⁹ Mrs. Richards provided one more example of a viable alternative to marriage.

⁸⁸ [Mrs. A.M. Richards], Memories of a Grandmother, by a Lady of Massachusetts (Boston: 1854), p. 65.

⁸⁹ [Richards,] 86, 99-100, 103, 119-120, 125. Though most women spent much of their lives in the households of males (whether fathers, brothers, husbands, or sons) many enjoyed increased autonomy in widowhood. Their consistent refusal to remarry shows that in spite of their sometimes difficult financial situations, they -- once they were experienced in both marriage and singleness -- found singlehood preferable to marriage.

Clara Barton, born in Oxford, Massachusetts, was "disinclined" to marry despite having several suitors. Though her biographer, Elizabeth Brown Pryor, suggests there were no suitable prospective husbands for Clara, there were enough for Clara to have married had that been her goal in life. Pryor apparently discounts the possibility that Barton made a conscious choice early in life to avoid a permanent liaison. Stephen Oates, on the other hand, points out that Barton saw marriage as death, saying of female friends, "[I] don't know if they are all dead or married, as for myself I am neither, entire, about half of the former, and not a bit of the latter, haven't taken the first step."⁹⁰ In later life, Barton's inability to work closely -- and happily -- with anyone who questioned her judgment or authority should be a clue to her unwillingness to become the lesser half in a marital relation. Those qualities would have made her a poor candidate for marriage, and Barton surely recognized that fact, as did her family. After her sister Mary remarked in 1855 that Clara was "too independent to marry any one," she suggested that they band together to keep "Old Maids Hall," -- which was exactly the solution adopted by many Massachusetts women. The strong-minded woman cannot necessarily be happy with a man who allows her to run everything -- and Clara Barton was a strong-minded woman.⁹¹

Lucy Larcom (1824-1893) was a former Lowell mill girl and teacher at Wheaton who rejected a long-term suitor because his attitude toward slavery did not

⁹⁰ My thanks to Stephen Oates for this quote from his research on Clara Barton, mss. p. 23 and p. 6 note on p. 361. Clara Barton letter to Bernard Vassall, July 28, 1860, Clara Barton Papers, Library of Congress.

⁹¹ Elizabeth Brown Pryor, Clara Barton, Professional Angel (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), pp. 24-27; Chambers-Schiller, 15.

match her own high standards. During the years she had been courted, she had become an ardent abolitionist, but her fellow's ethical code had not developed along the same lines as hers. She later wrote -- and published -- a poem about the episode.

Not yours, -- because you are not man enough
 To grasp your country's measure of a man,
 If such as you, when Freedom's ways are rough,
 Cannot walk in them, -- learn that women can!⁹²

A more stinging or public rebuke would be hard to imagine. Having rejected that fellow, Larcom decided not to marry at all. Charting an independent course and considering the pitfalls she had avoided, she wrote "Unwedded."

And here is a woman who understood
 Herself, her work, and God's will with her,
 To gather and scatter His sheaves of good,
 And was meekly thankful, though men demur.
 Would she have walked more nobly, think,
 With a man beside her, to point the way,
 Hand joining hand in the marriage link?
 Possibly, Yes: it is likelier, Nay.⁹³

None of these independent-minded Massachusetts needed a man "to point the way" for them. Many of them had easier lives than their married sisters.

Men as well as women reported on the pitfalls of marriage to the wrong individual. Though credit reports may seem an unlikely source of information on connubial bliss, R.G. Dun and Company credit investigators remarked on the difficulties that marriage caused businesswomen. Of 26 Berkshire County

⁹² Daniel Delaney Addison, Lucy Larcom: Life, Letters and Diary (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1971 reprint of 1894 edition), pp. 43, 58-59.

⁹³ Addison, 59.

businesswomen who were married when their credit was checked between 1840 and 1870, 20 or 77% had husbands with negative reports. (Assessing a husband's character was as necessary as assessing a married businesswoman's because in the early years of these reports, a woman's earnings and assets belonged to her husband.)

The saga of Julia (or Julina) Blackinton and William Mitchell of North Adams is a case in point. As the credit investigator told the story of the Baptist milliner yoked to a difficult spouse,

[1846] Husband embarrassed by debts. [Mrs. Mitchell is] smart and sister to Sandford Blackinton. [1849] Husband owes debts he will not pay. [She] makes money fast, husband not worth a cent, but she is honest and doing large business and has property in her own name. [1850] Her husband drinks, she own small real estate, very industrious & prompt, will pay all she contracts, if her husband does not interfere. An energetic woman . . . [1851] Dissipated husband. [1852] Husband is good for oo, what she promises to pay is paid -- her honor is capital. [1853-1855] [Husband] good for nothing -- insolvent -- not in business. [1860] [Mrs. Mitchell] Lays up money & pays promptly. [1863] Closed business. [1864] Supports her family by her own labor, buys sparingly & pays promptly. [1868] Owns real estate, worth \$5,000-6,000, good safe businesswoman. Her domestic relations have been unfortunate but she isn't a widow.⁹⁴

Julina Blackinton, daughter of Baptist Deacon Otis Blackinton of North Adams, had married Mitchell in 1837. By 1840, they had one child, Wells. In 1843, Julia, along with her brother Sandford and sister-in-law Elizabeth, plus her Mitchell in-laws Willard and Waity, were all baptized in the Baptist church. Her husband's name is conspicuously absent from the record of what was obviously a family affair. The Baptists' traditional support of temperance may offer the necessary clue to his absence

⁹⁴ Massachusetts Volume 3, pp. 49 & 69G, R.G. Dun and Company Collection, Baker Library, Harvard School of Graduate Business Administration. (Hereafter Dun & Co.) I have taken the liberty of spelling out words commonly abbreviated and adding punctuation to make credit reports more easily understandable.

from the group baptism. Census enumerators in 1850 and 1860 listed William Mitchell as head of the household, but with no occupation. In 1860, Julia's occupation, milliner, was listed under the blank space for her husband. By 1860, Wells was living with a wealthy Blackinton brother and working as a store clerk, and Julia's household contained only her husband.⁹⁵ The Dun and Company records provide insight into family circumstances that might otherwise have remained hidden.

Julia Mitchell's case was not the only illustration of the hazards of marriage among Berkshire businesswomen. Other businesswomen's credit reports include notes such as, "No change, except her husband is dead, which is a source of principal gain." "Afflicted with a drunken husband." "Has no capital but her good character and a poor husband." "Husband not remarkable for his enterprise." "Husband the most miserable wretch alive." "Never heard of anyone foolish enough to trust him." "No better off for having a husband." "Smart woman with a dissipated good for 00 husband." "He is a shiftless and indolent fellow."⁹⁶ Even smart women who were successful in business were not necessarily successful in their choice of a marriage partner. It may be worth noting here that an ambitious woman, even one afflicted with a thriftless, intemperate and improvident or even lazy husband, was capable of supporting herself and her family through millinery. The pay was good enough to

⁹⁵ U.S. Census, Adams, Massachusetts, 1850 & 1860; "Berkshire Star and Other Berkshire Newspapers Vital Records, 1817-1849," Rollin H. Cooke, comp. (Berkshire Athenaeum), Massachusetts Eagle (Lenox), October 5, 1837; "North Adams Baptist Church Record of Members . . . Before 1860," Mrs. William Windrow, comp. (Berkshire Athenaeum, 1940), pp. 26, 27, 29.

⁹⁶ Dun & Co., 150 & 208, 291.3, 284, 139, 50 & 69b, 113j, 37, 252 & 255, 186.

attract women who preferred to remain single -- hence the substantial number of widows and single women who made their living from this occupation.

Furthermore, when women could support themselves, it was not necessary for them to marry. The increasing numbers of women who remained single through the nineteenth century did not all inherit property; some of them earned it on their own, through studied industry and careful management. In Massachusetts, the market revolution opened up more opportunities for women's employment than in states that developed more slowly -- so Massachusetts women were more likely to be able to afford to remain single. By combining forces with other women and/or female kin and working serial careers, they could live much more independently than their grandmothers or great-grandmothers.

Many single women led lives that were a combination of tough-minded independence and reserve labor force for their kin. A good description of such a woman was in Boston's Atlantic Monthly in an 1864 story by Harriet Beecher Stowe. "The Cathedral" describes the maiden Aunt Esther who lived alone in "her little hermitage" on a small competency, devoting her time to study but available whenever kin needed help in nursing or teaching children. Stowe maintained that, in addition to loving independence, Aunt Esther was single because her standards were so high that no man could meet them. "In her early days of attractiveness," Stowe wrote, "none who would have sought her could meet the high requirements of her ideality; she never saw her hero, and so never married."⁹⁷ Stowe may have modelled the spinster

⁹⁷ Harriet Beecher Stowe, "The Cathedral," first published 1864 in The Atlantic Monthly, in The Oven Birds, Gail Parker, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1972), pp. 203-214.

on any of the older single women she knew, including her own sister, Catherine, who had taken over her household while Harriet finished writing Uncle Tom's Cabin,⁹⁸ or Lucy Larcom, who visited her in 1862 when the Stowes lived in Andover.⁹⁹

Single kinswomen such as Aunt Esther -- or the Arms sisters -- were essential as a reserve labor force or "deputy wives" in the nineteenth century, and it was, to judge from women's diaries, the rare family that did not use their labor at one time or another. Women stepped into others' households to help much more often than men. This mutual aid may have been the basis for the sisterhood many nineteenth-century women expressed by maintaining primarily-female households.¹⁰⁰

Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, an authoress mentored by Mrs. Stowe, commented on the attitude of her Andover townsmen when confronted with a successful woman.

⁹⁸ Jeanne Boydston, Mary Kelley & Anne Margolis, The Limits of Sisterhood (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), p. 157.

⁹⁹ Addison, 146. Many of these women knew each other or each other's writings. Susanna Rowson had read Wollstonecraft and repackaged that message in a more palatable form for her students such as Eliza and Octavia Southgate. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps and Larcom knew Stowe; Phelps knew Lydia Maria Child; Phelps chose a writing career after reading Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Aurora Leigh; and of course everyone knew the Alcotts, Emersons and Margaret Fuller long before Louisa May Alcott published her first word or Ellen Tucker Emerson started keeping her diary. The later crowd of women who wrote all seemed to know Lucy Stone -- or had heard her speak. It seems remarkable that there was a degree of commonality in acquaintance as well as in reading materials for these women, who lived from dozens to hundreds of miles apart in a time when mass communications had not yet arrived to draw together a community of minds from women across the state -- but such was the strength of sisterhood, with its sense of shared purpose as well as shared burden.

¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, some single women living with relatives hardly lifted a hand to help as was the case with Elizabeth Hawthorne in the household of her brother, Nathaniel Hawthorne. Sophia Hawthorne wrote to her mother that she had seen Elizabeth only once in the two years they had shared the same house. Elizabeth, who rose at noon and walked, read and wrote until after midnight, was "not available for everyday purposes of pot hooks and trammels, spits and flat-irons." Manning Hawthorne, ed., "Aunt Ebe: Some Letters of Elizabeth M. Hawthorne," New England Quarterly 20 (1947), pp. 214-215.

The best of [Andover's] good men were too feudal in those days, to understand a life like Mrs. Stowe's. It should be remembered that we have moved on since then, so fast and so far, that it is almost as hard now for us to understand the perplexity with which intelligent, even instructed men, used to consider the phenomenon of a superior woman, as it was for such men to understand such a woman at all. Let us offer to them the width of sympathy and fineness of perception which they did not always know how to offer to the woman.¹⁰¹

After her book, The Gates Ajar, was a success, Phelps summered in Gloucester in a cottage dubbed "The Old Maids' Paradise." Her view of marriage was no doubt affected by the "feudal" men in Andover. She was not the only Andover woman to feel that there were better options than marriage to an Andover man.

A lady of the village, said to have been once very handsome, was credibly reported to have refused nineteen offers of marriage. Another, still plainly beautiful, was known to have received and declined the suits of nine theologues in one winter. Neither of these ladies married. We watched their whitening hairs and serene faces with a certain pride of sex, not easily to be understood by a man. When we began to think how many times they *might* have married, the subject assumed sensational proportions. In fact, the maiden ladies of Andover always, I fancied, regarded each other with a peculiar sense of peace. Each knew -- and knew that the rest knew -- that it was (to use the Andover phraseology) not of predestination or foreordination, but of free will absolute, that an Andover girl passed through life alone.¹⁰²

Those Andover women, like Lanesborough's Susan Baker, were offered marriage and declined. Regardless of the unfavorable ratio of males to females, they had marital opportunities and chose to forego them "of free will absolute."

¹⁰¹ Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Chapters From A Life (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1897), pp.133-134.

¹⁰² Phelps, 29, 194.

Seemingly every woman knew another woman who was brutalized by her husband, a woman whose husband squandered his money whether he had a lot or only a little, a woman forced to support a husband who was incompetent in business, a woman who had been put out of her house and not allowed to see her children or conversely, a woman who was a prisoner within her home, with a tyrannical husband who would allow her no mail, reading material, or visitors -- or even a woman whose husband had her declared insane and incarcerated in a madhouse. Those situations received enough press that the female public was well aware of the chance they would take if they married men who turned out to be less than ideal. The prudent course might be to not gamble on marriage, because if the woman lost, she could be stuck in a losing game for the rest of her life. As Chambers-Schiller noted, "such words as gamble and lottery were commonly used to describe the institution of marriage . . . women rarely knew what kind of man they had 'won' until it was too late and the 'die cast.'"¹⁰³ Only by remaining single could a woman protect herself from making a bad match, retain a semblance of autonomy and pursue her own interests.

Even as increasing numbers of Massachusetts women opted for singlehood, the public debate on women's proper place became more heated. As Elizabeth Warbasse points out, "the number of articles on women's proper sphere increased fourfold [in periodicals] between 1830-1840 over the decade 1820-1830."¹⁰⁴ Massachusetts' women readers had an increasing volume, as well as increasing variety, of ideas to consider concerning the relations of men and women. Hundreds of nineteenth-century

¹⁰³ Chambers-Schiller, 49.

¹⁰⁴ Warbasse, 132 fn.

publications as well as individual women discussed the hazards of marriage, promoting the concept that marriage was not necessarily a desirable state, and that women were better off single than in a bad marriage. Even in rural areas of New England," there were few households where periodicals were not taken; changing attitudes by authors of prescriptive articles were widely disseminated, and one of the views many authors expressed was that "while marriage [was] desirable for women, it [was] not essential." Women's publications occasionally ran "mild crusades" to boost the status of single women.¹⁰⁵ Nancy Cott has pointed out the change in women's attitude toward marriage after the Revolution: the increased expectation of companionate marriage and the reciprocal obligations within marriage, which was in print in the Boston Gentleman's and Lady's Town and Country Magazine as early as 1784.¹⁰⁶

Portraiture

Yet another sort of evidence for women's increasing preference for independence can be seen in New England portraiture. Though in earlier decades fathers and male guardians had commissioned portraits to promote their female charges in the marriage market, there was between 1820 and 1850 a trend for single

¹⁰⁵ Jacob Abbott, New England by One of her Sons (Boston, 1835), 25, quoted in Nancy Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 10; Welter, "Cult," fn. 96. See also Lee Chambers-Schiller, Nancy Cott and Terri Premo for documentation of this phenomenon.

¹⁰⁶ Nancy Cott, "Divorce and the Changing Status of Women," The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective, 2d edition, Michael Gordon, ed. (New York: St. Martin's, 1978), pp. 130-131.

women to commission their own portraits to celebrate their autonomy. Thus the moderately affluent Dolly Wiley of Sunderland in 1837 and textile mill loom dresser Sarah Shedd of Lowell in 1833, both spinsters, joined the trend.¹⁰⁷

Perhaps Massachusetts women in the nineteenth century were at a point of congruence of several factors, none of which alone would have influenced them in favor of singlehood, but which, working together, gave some women reason to choose to remain unmarried. Increasingly, motive, means and opportunity may have enabled them to remain single and relatively independent. The grim scenarios invoked by Grimké and others may explain why some women preferred to avoid marriage and might indicate why some women, whether heterosexual or lesbian, preferred to live with other women. Considering the number of single adult women in Massachusetts, there was no shortage of potential housemates: single and widowed sisters, cousins, friends and mothers abounded. Judging from the gender balance in households headed by women, that is exactly what they did. Women created feminine enclaves where women earned the money, women controlled the finances, women made the decisions. Though the majority of women who wished to marry did marry, many women understood, as Eliza Farrar noted in her book of advice to young ladies, that "Matrimony is with women the great business of life, whereas with men it is only an incident."¹⁰⁸ Many women refrained from making marriage their "great business,"

¹⁰⁷ Meet Your Neighbors: New England Portraits, Painters and Society, 1790-1850, Caroline F. Sloat, ed. (Sturbridge, MA: Old Sturbridge Village, 1992), pp. 125, 135.

¹⁰⁸ Farrar, 257.

and created families in their own image. That world of women was one which few men recognized or validated.

Some men were concerned with the state's surplus women -- the state legislature actually considered exporting women to the new western territories -- until legislators realized such an action would cripple Massachusetts' textile industry.¹⁰⁹ But after it became clear that those independent women were an increasing percentage of the population -- and the property-owners -- it became harder for men to wish away the "woman question."

Perhaps the increase in female landowners from 1800 to 1860 reflected parents' awareness that growing numbers of single daughters would need to have sufficient property to support themselves. The increase in female property owners, well before the Married Women's Property Acts, may have provoked male legislators to provide protection for married women's property as parents were already providing property to protect their unmarried daughters.

¹⁰⁹ Chambers-Schiller, 32-33.

CHAPTER 4

CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN'S LANDOWNERSHIP

Women landowners increased in western Massachusetts in the nineteenth century. The 63 women in the sample towns were only 3% of landowners in 1800, but that was a marked increase over the 1.7% of taxable estates owned by women in 1771. By 1850, 150 female landowners represented 6% of those taxed for real estate in nine sample towns. In the eight towns with lists available for 1860, there were 173 female taxpayers, representing 6% of the whole. That was about the same proportion as had existed in 1850, when the nine towns for which full data is available showed ranges from 2% (Goshen) to 12% (Pittsfield) of landowners who were female. Other towns' female landowners clustered around the 6% point.¹¹⁰

Generally speaking, the smaller agrarian hilltowns were less hospitable to women landowners: a tiny percentage of landowners were women and few persisted on the tax lists for a decade. Women stood a better chance of maintaining their position on the tax lists in Pittsfield, a county seat and manufacturing town where some businesswomen held their property for decades. Women were not only exploited by capitalism as workers -- some of them also exploited the system for their own gain and in larger towns there were more opportunities for them to do so.

¹¹⁰ See Chart 2: Women and Landownership. N.B. Only seven towns had tax lists of for each of the four census years studied: Pittsfield, Lanesborough, Dalton, Deerfield, Ashfield, Sheffield and Blandford. Pruitt, Massachusetts Tax Valuation List for 1771 (Boston: 1978).

Comparison of Landownership Levels

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, women's landownership patterns resembled those of men's in that the majority clustered in the middle ranges of \$200 to \$2,000 worth of real estate. In 1800, women's ownership levels were comparable to those of men. By 1820, however, male landowners in the lower brackets were represented at a rate half that of women; above \$2,000, men were represented at a rate nearly double that of women, as seen in the following chart:

Chart 7. Comparison of Landownership Levels: Female and Male

	1800		1820 ¹¹¹	
	♀	♂	♀	♂
< \$200	9 (17%)	301 (18%)	17 (22%)	182 (11%)
\$200-2,000	37 (71%)	1115 (68%)	47 (62%)	1032 (61%)
\$2,000-4,999	5 (10%)	202 (12%)	11 (14%)	362 (21%)
\$5,000+	1 (2%)	28 (2%)	1 (1%)	114 (7%)
N =	52 (3%)	1646	76 (4.4%)	1690

Chart 7. Comparison of Landownership Levels: Female and Male.

In addition, there was a growing disparity of wealth among men in western Massachusetts from 1800 to 1820. In the five towns for which full information is available for both years, the number of men who owned zero real estate jumped from 380 to 623 (64% increase) -- over the same two decades when the population of adult

¹¹¹ Chapter 6 contains a comparison of taxpayers and landownership by women who wrote wills 1830-1860. See Chart 18.

1800 data is from local tax lists compared with 1798 Massachusetts Direct Tax; 1820 is from local tax lists compared with probate records. 1820 excludes Ashfield. Percentages may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding.

There seems to be no particular rule about what values of property ownership should be used. Soltow's 1798 study started at \$0, then ranged from \$50 up to \$200,000, each level being about double the previous one. Pessen's 1810 figures for personal and real estate combined were <\$500, \$500-1000, \$1000-2500, \$2500-4000, \$4,000-\$15,000, and >\$15,000; his 1841 categories ranged from <\$100 in different increments to >\$50,000. Doherty used deciles, which are perfectly useful within one town but less so when a number of towns are combined, because of different land values in different areas.

The categories I first used were \$0, <\$100, \$100-199, \$200-499, \$500-999, \$1,000-1999, \$2,000-2999, \$3,000-4999, \$5,000-9999 & \$10,000+. After compiling the totals, it was clear that very few owned less than \$200 real estate; that amount appeared to be not enough to farm, though it may have been held as an investment or represented the first purchase of a young man just starting to buy land. Hence the levels used in Chart 8. There was a sharp division below the \$5000 point, or what Pessen described as the level of real wealth. Having begun with what were smaller and nearly arbitrary categories, I combined them for the later decades according to the logic of the results: middle class in the \$1000 to \$2,999 range, bracketed by the lower and the upper.

males decreased 8%.¹¹² Men in lower real estate ownership brackets were either losing their property (becoming the "casualties" described by Robert Doherty) or clawing their way into higher brackets.¹¹³ At the same time, men in the \$5,000+ brackets (great real estate wealth) had increased substantially, from which we might infer that the most affluent were increasing their holdings at the expense of the less affluent. As acreage concentrated in the hands of the wealthiest, tenancy increased.¹¹⁴

As tenancy increased, more women, both widows and single women, showed up on the census lists as heads of households even though, as renters owning no real estate, they did not show up on the tax lists. From 1800 to 1820, the eleven sample towns' female heads-of-households, most of them unlanded, more than doubled, from 70 to 167 (or from 2.6% to 5.6% of the total heads-of-households)¹¹⁵ while the number of women landowners increased by 55%. By 1850, the number of female heads-of-households was 388, or 8.3%, and in 1860 it was 494, or 8.6%. Because tenancy increased more slowly than did female heads-of-households, it is evident that women were establishing their own households at an unprecedented rate in the first

¹¹² 1800 & 1820 U.S. Census & local tax records for Pittsfield, Sheffield, Stockbridge, Northampton & Deerfield. The Massachusetts 1798 Direct Tax did not record those who owned zero real estate.

¹¹³ Doherty, 49-55.

¹¹⁴ That pattern grew more pronounced nationwide in the nineteenth century: see Soltow's Men and Wealth.

¹¹⁵ 1800, 1820, 1850 & 1860 U.S. Census for Pittsfield, Lanesborough, Dalton, Sheffield, Stockbridge, Blandford, Northampton, Goshen, Granby, Ashfield & Deerfield.

half of the nineteenth century. (This phenomenon is discussed in detail in the chapter on gender balance in female-headed households.)

By mid-century, the increase in women landowners paralleled the increase in women heads-of-households. In 1850, there were 150 female landowners in nine sample towns, and in 1860, there were 173 female landowners in the eight sample towns for which tax lists are available.¹¹⁶ Women were still clustered in lower levels of landownership, but there were more of them: an increase of more than 100% since 1800. Most of that increase happened between 1820 and 1850.

Bearing in mind, as Gerda Lerner points out, that most women "took their position in society through the men of their own family or the men they married," if more men were non-landowners or tenant farmers on the low end of the economic scale, more women would be there, too, whether as widows, wives or adult daughters.¹¹⁷ The implication for women landowners is that when men died and their widows received their dower thirds, they slipped into a lower bracket of real estate ownership unless the husbands had bequeathed full control of all the property instead of just a life estate in the widow's third. Most widows ended up with fewer assets than their husbands had owned.¹¹⁸ But when more men were in the upper brackets, more women would end up there, too. Both cases were true in 1820: the

¹¹⁶ 1850 excludes Stockbridge & Northampton; 1860 excludes Northampton, Goshen & Granby.

¹¹⁷ Gerda Lerner, "The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson," Midcontinent American Studies Journal v. 10, #1 (spring 1969), p. 6.

¹¹⁸ This pattern changed dramatically in the 1840s, when Berkshire County husbands began to favor their wives with full control of their remaining estate.

wealthiest and the poorest groups of women landowners had increased while the middle decreased. In no case, however, did the wealth of women at the highest level approach the wealth of men at the highest level.¹¹⁹

There was a similar pattern between 1850 and 1860: the 1860 aggregates show an increase in upper and lower brackets while the middle numbers remained nearly the same. New England's economic swings could account for this cyclical variation, or it could have been caused for reasons unknown. The 1819 recession could account for middle class losses in 1820. Female testators' real estate dropped by half from the 1810s to 1820s; male testators' real estate, however, increased during the same period, so it is evident that the recession was a greater burden on women with smaller holdings than on men. (See chart in chapter on Berkshire County wills.)

Widows as Landowners

In these western Massachusetts towns, women property owners were mostly widows. As was pointed out earlier, in towns where assessors routinely included a title for female taxpayers, 67% (143 of 215) had "Wd," "Wid" or "Wdo" by their names. The majority (62%) of female testators who owned real estate were also widows. Of the 73 women taxpayers whose 1820 marital status was determinable, few (8, or 11%) were single. Women's real wealth was concentrated in the middle range and lower, as might be expected for widows holding dower thirds or widows whose husbands had earlier given property to adult children. Because widows' dower was not reported on widows' property inventories, however, it is important to

¹¹⁹ See Chart 15 for landownership levels of female testators in Berkshire Co. 1830-1860.

remember that many if not most widows had life use of assets that would have raised their standard of living but which would not have shown up on their inventories.¹²⁰

A complete picture of women's assets would require cross-referencing their property with the dower distributed to them at the time of their husbands' probate.

Though equivalent information is unavailable for women landowners before 1850, comparing information from census and assessors' lists for 1850 and 1860 shows that 50% to 60% of female landowners were in their fifties or sixties (49% in 1850 and 59% in 1860). Women's pattern of landownership followed the expected course for widows: they had less wealth than men, but their wealth increased into middle age before it decreased again as they divested themselves of property.

The chart below shows the variation in age of 67 female landowners in six of the sample towns in 1850.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Alice Hanson Jones with Boris Simkovich, "The Wealth of Women, 1774," Strategic Factors in Nineteenth Century American Economic History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 249.

¹²¹ Gathering genealogical data on women is notoriously difficult, particularly for those of less prosperous families. It took four hours to track down the maiden name and birthdate of Elizabeth Robbins, one of the wealthiest persisting Pittsfield widows.

It was, however, possible to establish the age of 67 female landowners of 1850 in Lanesborough, Pittsfield, Sheffield, Ashfield, Deerfield and Blandford, because those names appeared on both census and assessors' lists. In Blandford, the census taker recorded the first and last name of each woman, while the tax assessors recorded most as "Mrs." or "Widow of," followed by the husband's name. Thanks to Doris Hayden's "Blandford Families," (BA) I was able to sort out most of them.

Chart 8. Real Wealth and Age of 1850 Female Landowners

Age/\$	<500	500-999	1000s	2000s	3000-4999	Ttl
20s	0	2	0	0	1	3
30s	1	0	3	2	0	6
40s	7	2	3	3	0	15
50s	7	5	2	2	0	16
60s	5	2	4	1	0	12
70s +	6	2	5	2	0	15
N =	26	13	17	10	1	67

Chart 8. Real Wealth and Age of 1850 Female Landowners. From 1850 Census and assessors' valuation lists for 6 sample towns.

In his study of men and wealth, Lee Soltow found that assets increased with age until around age 64, when men apparently began to divest themselves of their estate.¹²²

These women's assets peaked a little younger than did Soltow's men -- probably because women generally married men older than themselves. Though there were more older women in the sample, as one might expect from a sample dominated by widows, holdings of women in their forties, fifties, sixties and seventies were similar.

Few Berkshire County women wrote wills in the nineteenth century. Even fewer owned real estate; only 26% (87/341) of women's wills disposed of real estate from 1800 to 1860. That situation held through the 1820s. But in the 1830s, the

¹²² Lee Soltow, Men and Wealth in the United States, 1850-1870 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), p. 53.

number of widows who wrote wills disposing of real estate took a startling jump, with smaller increases by single and married women, as shown in the chart below.

Chart 9. Marital Status of Landowning Testators 1800-1860

	<u>Widow or probably widow</u>	<u>Married</u>	<u>Single</u>	<u>Total</u>
1800s	2	0	1	3
1810s	3	0	3	6
1820s	5	0	2	7
1830s	16	0	4	20
1840s	14	3	7	24
1850s	14	5	8	27
N =	54 (62%)	8 (9%)	25 (29%)	87

Chart 9. Marital Status of Landowning Testators 1800-1860. From 341 Berkshire County women's wills.

Most testatrices (62%) who owned land outright were widows, and most of their wills were written after 1830. Singlewomen represented only 29% of the women who bequeathed real estate. Because of the passage of the Massachusetts Married Women's Property Acts starting in the late 1840s, it is logical that more women controlled real estate in the 1840s and 1850s. What is puzzling, however, is the large number of widows who bequeathed land in the 1830s, before married women had legislative encouragement to own land free from their husbands' control. Perhaps there was a trend in the 1830s for husbands to will full use of their property to their wives, and thereby give their widows more than dower would have provided -- a

practice which would have put more property into women's hands, giving them more reason to write wills.¹²³ Possibly husbands were protecting their assets from creditors by settling it on their wives. Or maybe women were protecting themselves through the use of prenuptial agreements. Parents and husbands were definitely protecting their daughters and wives with "sole and separate use" settlements by the 1840s. Certainly the abuse of women's property by their husbands and/or confiscation of wives' property by husbands' creditors was well known by the 1830s, so women may have begun to take advantage of the protection afforded by equity in common law before the new acts were passed.

By the 1850s, landownership was just one of several routes to fiscal autonomy. More and more women acted as creditors or lived on the proceeds of invested funds, whether inherited or earned.¹²⁴ Women not only participated in western Massachusetts' burgeoning capitalism, they participated at every level from the poorest to the wealthiest as they had in England since the 1500s.¹²⁵ Berkshire

¹²³ There was a sharp increase in the number of men who made females their primary beneficiaries starting in the 1830s, but further research would be necessary to compile an adequate sample for determining trends specifically benefiting wives. See Chapter 7, chart 23.

¹²⁴ Most occupations of women taxpayers who were also heads-of-households were not determinable in 1820 because the census listed occupations as household totals. Of 118 women's households in sample towns in 1820, only six had occupations listed that could reasonably be attributed to adult women (five in manufacturing and one in agriculture). The other 100+ had no occupation listed. In 1850, few women had occupations listed, but by 1860, the majority had employment listed, even if it was only "widow."

¹²⁵ B.A. Holderness, "Widows in Pre-Industrial Society: An Essay Upon Their Economic Functions," Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle, Richard M. Smith, ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 436.

County women's wills confirm that women's financial independence through investment securities grew from 1800 to 1860. Before 1800, there were no women testators in Berkshire County whose wills or inventories mentioned notes or bank shares. From 1800 through 1819, three widows disposed of notes in their wills. In the 1820s, four widows and one single woman bequeathed notes ranging from a total of \$140 to \$1864. In the 1830s, that number tripled: ten widows and four single women bequeathed notes and bank shares totalling \$90 to \$6467. In the 1840s and 1850s, railroad stocks made their appearance, though notes and bank shares were the investments of choice for many women. In the 1840s, 23 women (13 widows, six single women, one wife and four women of undetermined marital status) bequeathed notes totalling from \$52 to \$17,000. By the 1850s, 26 women's probate records included notes and/or interest-bearing investments (14 widows, seven singles, one wife, and four of undetermined marital status).¹²⁶

As women put money into banks, however, the decisions about who would receive it in loans was turned over to male bank officials. As Christopher Clark points out, "Not merely capitalists but people from among the working poor now contributed capital to business." A woman who allowed the bank to make decisions about who should receive credit traded her ability to exert community control as a creditor for increased security for her money. The irony, of course, is that business profited in yet another way from the assets of the poor, while bank officers "exercised

¹²⁶ Berkshire County Probate files, 1800-1860. See Chapter 7.

a greater degree of discipline over the local economy," increasing their power over the community.¹²⁷

Western Massachusetts Widows

Considering that Massachusetts legislators did not originally intend for land to belong to married women except as necessary to support them in widowhood, it is not surprising that the majority of women landowners were widows. The earliest type of woman taxpayer in the period covered by this study was the widow who lost her husband in the Revolution. Ruth Noble, listed on the federal census as a head-of-household as well as on the Pittsfield tax list in 1790 as owing 2s 3d 1f county tax on her real estate, was the widow of David Noble, a tanner and saddler who had begun his career as a shoemaker. After leading a company to Canada in early 1776 and enduring months of fatigue, cold, and poor food, Captain Noble caught smallpox. Mrs. Noble rushed to nurse him back to health, but to no avail. At her husband's death, the forty-four-year-old Ruth Noble had six children at home ranging in age from two to sixteen, a married daughter, and a twenty-one-year old son.

Unfortunately for Widow Noble, her husband had liquidated much of his estate to supply arms and clothing to his company of Berkshire County volunteers. In addition, he had petitioned the Pittsfield selectmen to support the patriot cause, and thereby attracted the enmity of local Tories, who were blamed for the fire which destroyed his house, barn, store, saddlery and tannery in 1776. After losing her husband and most of their property, Ruth Noble was nearly destitute. Much of her

¹²⁷ Clark, 272.

widow's third lay in ashes. She had oversight over an insolvent estate and six children to support. She may have had cause to ponder the words of Cotton Mather:

Widowhood is a state of Affliction: and very singularly so, if the widow is bereaved of the Main Support that after the Death of her Husband was left unto her And how much are her Sorrows Embittered, by New Anxieties and Encumbrances coming upon her; Debts to be paid, and Mouths to be fed.

Ruth Noble had family nearby, so she had potential support. Her eldest son David, a blacksmith and gunsmith, practiced a trade essential to the Revolution. Her widow's dower, diminished as it was, was protected from creditors. Ruth Noble raised her family and persisted in Pittsfield until her younger children removed to Vermont.¹²⁸

A second type of widow was the woman whose husband died young, when they were just starting their life together. Lucy Remington of Pittsfield was such a case. Caleb Remington scratched out a brief will on August 17, 1808, and died September 5, aged 33. His will did not mention his pregnant wife, stating only, "I give and bequeath to my natural heir or heirs the whole of my estate." When Caleb died, he left nothing but a miserably small assortment of personal effects, a desk, account book, and bed, plus 18 acres of land worth \$540 which was sold after Lucy claimed her dower share, which was duly set off to her.¹²⁹

A widow left with such a small portion should have been expected to disappear into a family member's household with her new baby -- and yet Lucy persisted as

¹²⁸ U.S. 1790 Census, Pittsfield, MA; Pittsfield 1790 Tax List (reel #1 to 1798, BA); Lucius Boltwood, comp., History and Genealogy of the Family of Thomas Noble of Westfield, MA (Hartford: 1878), pp. 629, 633-640; Cotton Mather, The Widow of Nain (Boston, 1728), pp. 10-11 quoted in Keyssar, 99.

¹²⁹ BCP #2634 (Caleb Remington).

head of her own household and as a taxpayer, appearing on the tax lists and in the census in 1810 and 1820. In 1820 she owned one building and 1/4 acre of land (a tiny houselot, perhaps), the real estate worth nearly \$500. She may have converted her dower share into a home and/or shop in town, as she was engaged in a manufacturing occupation which would have given her an income to support herself and her daughter, Hannah.¹³⁰ In that respect, a widow or single woman who lived in a mill or manufacturing town had an advantage over one in a rural location: there were more employment opportunities in population centers. If she owned a house, she might have room to take in boarders, as well. She may have been able to secure employment in one of Pittsfield's textile mills.¹³¹ Lucy Remington persisted for more than a decade before disappearing from Pittsfield's tax rolls in 1821.¹³²

Not all widows were poor. The very poorest widows undoubtedly disappeared into relatives' households and consequently did not show up on tax or census lists in the early federal period. Ironically, the wealthiest widows may have not appeared under their own names in tax lists, but as "Estate of . . ." Mary Ballantine Ashley of Sheffield was a case in point. Because her father-in-law Col. John Ashley's estate took more than a decade to settle and because Col. Ashley's only son and primary

¹³⁰ Pittsfield Vital Records, book 1, p. 224, lines 25 & 27, BA; BCP #2634 (Caleb Remington); U.S. 1810 & 1820 Censuses; Pittsfield Tax Records, 1810 & 1820. Caleb Remington fit the \$200/year model described by Robert Doherty: a young man did not begin to accumulate property until about age 30, and then, on average, could be expected to accumulate property (real and personal) at a rate of about \$200 per year. Doherty, 47.

¹³¹ Pittsfield Sun, Oct. 6, 1814, pp. 3-4 advertisements.

¹³² A Lucy Remington appeared in family #644 of the 1850 census of Pittsfield, age 70, born CT, but not as head of a household. Without knowing her relationship to the rest of the household, it is impossible to know if this is the same woman.

heir, Gen. John Ashley Jr. (Mary's husband) predeceased his father, it was impossible to tell from either tax lists or convoluted probate proceedings just what Gen. John Jr.'s widow, Mary, was worth. The stack of documents in those probate files reveals a woman periodically requesting financial support from the court over a number of years while a horde of men swarmed over the estate.¹³³



Illustration 3. Home of Louisa and General John Ashley.

¹³³ BCP #2018 (Gen. John Ashley Jr.) & #2195 (Col. John Ashley); Francis Bacon Trowbridge, The Ashley Genealogy (New Haven: 1896), pp. 55 & 95. Perhaps Gen. Ashley had the satisfaction of outliving two of his sons, Roger and Samuel, whose joint monument reads "Few and evil were our days."

One daughter of liberty, a widow who fulfilled the Revolutionary ideal of the wife as co-contributor, was Elizabeth Deming Robbins of Pittsfield. She managed her husband's business interests with great success for thirty-five years after his death.¹³⁴ When Nathaniel Robbins died at age 50 in November 1795, his affairs were in order, his oldest son established in the community, and his family left with more than a competence. Following the custom of the time, Nathaniel provided for his wife with the stipulation in his will that "Mrs. Elizabeth Robbins, my good and faithful wife shall possess one-third of all my property both real and personal during her life, and after her decease that the same shall be divided among our children."

For the next 35 years, Elizabeth Robbins acted as steward for that property, parceling it out to the children as they came of age and married, so that Nathaniel's estate would provide for all of them. Each son received a farm of at least 100 acres, and each daughter a share equal to one-half of what a son received.¹³⁵ Elizabeth enjoyed the use of (as her dower share) a \$500 house plus nearly \$950 worth of other buildings. In addition, the family had branched out into the mercantile business, ran a mill, and were partners in the manufacture of linen cloth. By 1827, Elizabeth's sons Oliver and Elijah were worth nearly \$6,000 each, and two of her grandsons' worth approached \$1,000.¹³⁶ After her husband's death, she not only preserved his

¹³⁴ Judson K. Deming, comp., Genealogy of the Descendants of John Deming of Wethersfield, CT (Dubuque, IA: 1904), p. 44; Henry R. Stiles, The History of Ancient Wethersfield, CT (New York: Grafton Press, 1904), pp. 571 & 574; Pittsfield 1792 West End Valuation List: Pittsfield Tax Records: reel #1, BA.

¹³⁵ BCP #1747 (Nathaniel Robbins).

¹³⁶ Pittsfield 1827 Tax List: Pittsfield Tax Records, reel #7, 1829-1831 (includes 1827 list out of sequence after 1828), BA.

estate, but invested and increased its value substantially. She shifted investments according to the market, operating a mill some years, putting money at interest other years. Widow Robbins did more than cast her bread upon the waters and wait for it to return. She did not fit the stereotypical image of the widow who couldn't cope with her husband's business affairs, as described by Terri Premo or Mary Beth Norton.¹³⁷ On the contrary, she was at the hub of a successful family who could credit their father only in part for giving them a start in life. Elizabeth Robbins achieved a certain distinction in death as well as in life: she was one of the few women who merited an obituary in the local newspaper in 1830:

Died,
In this town, on the 22d inst. Widow **ELIZABETH ROBBINS**, relict of the late Mr. Nathaniel Robbins, aged 83. She was one of the most industrious, benevolent, and valuable of women -- reared a large and useful family, and imbued them with correct moral and political principles, such as will sustain them through life, and render them useful. She lived, and was extremely active during our revolutionary struggle, and her patriotic efforts and sacrifices in those trying scenes would have done honor to the best patriot of the day. She was a professing and exemplary christian, and died, as we most ardently wish we all might, with a strong and lively hope of enjoying a happy future state. It is this state of mind which will smooth our passage to the grave.¹³⁸

Widow Robbins was a nineteenth-century paragon -- the woman who fulfilled the ideal of republican motherhood while promoting the financial success of her children - - a combination of piety, industry, and good business sense. Her accomplishments, "a large and useful family . . . imbued with correct moral and political principles," as

¹³⁷ Terri L. Premo, Winter Friends: Women Growing Old in the New Republic, 1785-1835 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), pp. 30-32; Mary Beth Norton, Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980), pp. 5-7.

¹³⁸ Pittsfield Sun, September 30, 1830, p. 3.

well as her service as "a professing and exemplary christian," could have served as a model for ideal womanhood as described by Barbara Welter, except that Elizabeth Robbins had interests, abilities and business well beyond the domestic sphere.¹³⁹

Widows predominated among women who owned real estate in western Massachusetts from 1800 to 1860: widows old and young, rich and poor. In addition there were a number of daughters who inherited property and remained single or who controlled their real estate dowry in the years before they married. There were very few married women with real estate among Berkshire County testators from 1800 to 1860 (about 4% of the total). Because women generally outlived their husbands, and considering that most of the time span studied was before the passage of the Married Women's Property Act of 1855, it would not be realistic to expect many married women to show up as testators or taxpayers between 1800 and 1860.

Western Massachusetts Daughters as Heirs

Massachusetts daughters may have benefitted from partible inheritance, an American innovation over English law. In England, primogeniture, or the custom of awarding all property to the eldest son, was a logical custom for preserving the family estate in a crowded country where many estates had already been divided until they would not provide a subsistence. Partible inheritance may have put real estate into the hands of women. When there was no will, the court would set aside the widow's dower third, then divide the remainder of the estate equally among all children

¹³⁹ Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective, 2d ed., Michael Gordon, ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), pp. 313-328.

regardless of gender, except for the oldest son, who received a double share.¹⁴⁰ If a daughter inherited property and remained single, or negotiated an antenuptial agreement with her husband-to-be, she could control her own property.

Thus, another type of woman landowner was the daughter who inherited property. In Deerfield, Lucy Arms, also known as Lucy 2d or Lucy Jr., according to tax assessors' and census lists, was an independent woman. After Aaron Arms died in 1806, his \$5705 in real estate was divided: one-third as dower to his widow, Lucy Arms Sr., and the remainder apportioned with sons Aaron and Ralph receiving \$726 apiece in land and acreage worth \$121 apiece to daughters Mary (1783-1863), Lucy (1785-1840), Sophie (1793-1857) and Martha/Patty (1796-?). Patty was the only sister to marry, and she waited until she was nearly 29 -- late for a woman of her time. Lucy Jr., Sophie and Mary lived into their fifties, sixties, and eighties, respectively, without marrying. According to the 1820 census, Lucy Tyler Arms Sr. headed a household of four women, presumably including three unwed daughters.¹⁴¹ Though the daughters' separate landholdings were small, together they could have provided a subsistence, especially if they did wage labor or outwork or sold dairy

¹⁴⁰ Jones, "Wealth of Women, 1774," p. 249. Some men in the late eighteenth century adopted a version of partible inheritance, wherein they gave sons or grandsons a double portion, as did David Clark of Sheffield when he wrote his will in 1776, allocating a life estate in his 110-acre farm to his daughter Phenix Warn and her husband Jacob, then distributing it to their heirs, two shares to each male, and one share to each female, including their daughter Sarah "her being born before wedlock notwithstanding." BCP #1100.

¹⁴¹ George Sheldon, History of Deerfield v. 2 (Deerfield, MA: Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Assoc, (henceforth PVMA) 1972 reprint of 1895-1896 original), p. 35; 1820 U.S. Census; Deerfield 1820 Tax List: reel #2, 1813-1839; James A. Martin, comp., Deerfield Probate Records (hereafter DPR), 1800-1836 v. 2 (1806-1812: Aaron Arms 1806) (Henry N. Flynt Library, Old Deerfield, hereafter HNFL).

products. Living in the family homestead and supporting each other, the Arms women could have had a comfortable household of relatively independent females.

Lucy Jr., Sophie and Patty Arms were charter members of a secret society which excluded males except as honorary members, and enjoined a vow of secrecy on those who belonged. The Young Ladies' Literary Society organized in 1813 to "render mutual assistance" in understanding science and literature, the "greatest promoters of human happiness."¹⁴² The Arms sisters' interdependent independence was not unusual for Massachusetts' single women, especially for those who believed that some things besides love and marriage were the "promoters of human happiness." For them, education accompanied independence.



Illustration 4. Mary Hawks.
(Memorial Hall Museum, Deerfield, MA)

Another club for Deerfield women was gathered by "Little Mary" Hawks (1799-1876), so called because she was a dwarf. Mary Hawks was a rural Massachusetts spinster born into the middle class. Educated at Deerfield Academy, she established a library, read Margaret Fuller's journal, The Dial, kept house for her father, ran a boarding house for students in Rochester, N.Y., and served other families as a nurse. After she

¹⁴² Sheldon, 828.

lost her money through a bad investment in 1848, she supported herself as a seamstress. She ended her days in the home of a niece in Waltham.¹⁴³ Mary Hawks' life followed a pattern typical for a single woman: serial employment for wages interspersed with household employment for family members.

If there were no other testimony to Massachusetts' women's desire for independence, their spinsterhood could have been attributed to an unfavorable ratio of men to women: by 1820, there were only 96 males age 26 or older for every 100 females of that age in the towns studied. (In 1800, the ratio had been 104 men to 100 women -- a ratio that favored women just as the older Arms sisters entered the age of earliest marriageability.)¹⁴⁴ But by 1850 the sex ratio favored women in their thirties -- yet there were more spinsters than earlier in the century. Singlehood depended as much on attitude as on the number of available men.

These spinsters may have experienced the "marriage trauma" of women who saw hazards in lifetime subjection to a man who might be a wolf in sheep's clothing.¹⁴⁵ They may also have shared the views of Mary Abby Dodge of

¹⁴³ Mellicent B. Hatch, "Recollections of Aunt Mary," History and Proceedings of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, 1912-1920, v. 6, pp. 449-453.

¹⁴⁴ 1800 & 1820 U.S. Censuses, excluding Sheffield in 1800 & Stockbridge in 1820. In explaining the increasing number of never-married women after the Revolution, Terri Premo cited the changing sex ratio and revolutionary ideology, which offered women options beyond marriage and family. Premo, 53-54.

¹⁴⁵ Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood, 83. Cott cited women's dubiousness toward marriage with Daniel Scott Smith's data on increasing numbers of spinsters in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. By combining information on marriage trauma with data on singleness, Cott made a case for women choosing to avoid marriage rather than lacking opportunities to marry. The facts that the gender ratio sometimes favored women, and yet all women did not marry, are clues to their "available but not interested" behavior. Smith, "Family Limitation, Sexual Control, and Domestic Feminism in Victorian America," Clio's Consciousness Raised, Mary S. Hartman & Lois Banner, eds. (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), p. 121.

Hamilton, Massachusetts in preserving their time for their own interests. As Dodge (1833-1896) wrote, "All my time at home is my own. I do what I choose, go where I choose, and when I choose."¹⁴⁶ Dodge stayed independent by remaining single, as did the Arms sisters. Mary, Lucy, and Sophie Arms had interests other than catching a man, as evidenced by their secret society and their spinsterhood. They appear to have been members of the nineteenth-century sisterhood which extolled the virtues of singleness over the hazards of marriage.

Persistence

Widow Noble, Widow Robbins, Widow Remington, and the Arms sisters were remarkable in their persistence, which indicates that their communities were somehow hospitable to widows and/or single women. Persistence within a community is a measure of how well it socially and economically supports its population or a specific group within it. Persistence among landowners can be particularly significant, because it shows the tenacity of certain families in establishing themselves and their offspring. In terms of this study, persistence could be construed as a measure of how well the community supported its single women and/or widows, and perhaps the degree of social pressure to marry.¹⁴⁷ Pittsfield and Deerfield supported women well. Goshen did not: it had few female landowners and no persisters. Even so, few

¹⁴⁶ [Mary Abby Dodge,] Gail Hamilton's Life in Letters v. 1, H. Augusta Dodge, ed., (Boston: 1901), p. 53.

¹⁴⁷ These numbers are not refined for mortality. It would be helpful to know the age of these women, to get an idea of whether they disappeared from the tax lists because they died, or because they married, or because they emigrated, but the difficulty of doing genealogical research on women precludes that investigation for women in the census years before 1850.

women taxpayers persisted on the tax lists for a decade or more, and the majority of the persisters were widows living on dower. Only six of the eighteen persisters were single; the marital status of another persister is unknown.¹⁴⁸ Considering the probable age of women who owned land, many may have died before the next census.

Chart 10. Persistence of Female Taxpayers 1800-1820

	<u>1800</u>	<u>1820</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Women Taxpayers	63	94	+ 49%
Persisting 10 Years	not applicable	12 (19%)	
Persisting 20 Years	not applicable	6 (10%)	

Chart 10. Persistence of Women Taxpayers 1800-1820. From sample towns' assessors' tax lists.

Marriage, death, relocation, and/or distribution of their property as they moved into their children's or other relatives' households removed women from tax lists.¹⁴⁹

Conversely, widows stayed on tax lists because they did not remarry.

As Terri Premo reported in Winter Friends, some widows were in no hurry to remarry. Like women reluctant to marry at all, many widows preferred to avoid a repeat performance of a first marriage that might not have been the best match.

Premo also argued that

¹⁴⁸ It was not possible to positively establish the marital status of every woman who owned property. Some may have been divorcees, but a check of 55 Berkshire County and Hampshire County women whose marital status was unknown 1800-1820 turned up none who could be positively identified as a divorcee. Berkshire County and Hampshire County Superior Court pre-1850 divorce indexes.

¹⁴⁹ Further genealogical research might show some correlation between reason for disappearance from tax records and age at disappearance.

a deeply ingrained preference to maintain one's established identity prompted most older women to reject second marriages. Women already accustomed to depending on their children and other women for emotional support and security seemed unwilling to cast aside past allegiances for the uncertain prospects of a new spouse.¹⁵⁰

Remaining unmarried undoubtedly accounted for some widows' persistence on tax rolls. Some women were unwilling to supplant their women-centered ties with a chancy subjection to a man. Furthermore, a widow with the benefits of retirement, supported by a competence or grown children or enjoying the fruits of her labor without the extra work of a husband may have relished the advantages of singleness.

Several factors thus combined to double the percentage of women on tax rolls over the decades studied. Widows declined remarriage, and though they may have had only a life estate in their property, they appeared on tax rolls in increasing numbers. More opportunities for wage labor meant that more women could support themselves in more ways. Single women gained property through wage work or bequest and, as will be explained in the chapter on Berkshire County wills, bequeathed their property to other single women. In midcentury, a new phenomenon appeared: male testators favoring daughters over sons in their bequests. Before these factors are explored, it is necessary to understand Massachusetts women's property rights from Puritan beginnings to the more enlightened views of the 1850s.

¹⁵⁰ Premo, 24-25. Some women also frowned on the repeated remarriage of men. Betsey Howard of Northampton, on learning a widower was to remarry for the third time, was chided by Anne [Robbins] Lyman, "If a man's house burns down, should he not build it up again? It isn't in the nature of things for a man to live without a home." Mrs. Howard responded, "Well Mrs. Lyman, when a man's house has burned down twice, I should say it was an indication of Providence that he had better give up, and go to board." Susan I. Lesley, *Recollections of My Mother, Mrs. Anne Jean Lyman*, (Boston: 1899), p. 349.

CHAPTER 5

MASSACHUSETTS MARRIED WOMEN'S PROPERTY LAW

Land was essential to economic independence in the American colonies. Land was in fact what drew many emigrants to the New World. Real estate properly managed could provide lifetime support as well as a competency in old age.

Women's landownership in Massachusetts, as well as in several other colonies, evolved through two stages before the American Revolution. In the first stage, land was made available to single women, as well as to single men or men or women who were heads of households. Salem, Massachusetts initially offered "maids lotts" to unmarried women. Though it was uncommon, widowed heads of households could become proprietors of new towns in Massachusetts Bay. Pennsylvania offered 75 acres to independent and/or self-supporting single women. Virginia and South Carolina offered land to female servants who had completed their indentures.¹⁵¹

In the second stage, the distribution of land to women was curtailed. "Independent land ownership offered women subsistence outside marriage or domestic service," Kessler-Harris argues, "and colonies soon began to realize that giving land to women undermined their dependent role." Maryland threatened to confiscate spinsters' land. Massachusetts stopped distributing land to single women.¹⁵² After

¹⁵¹ Alice Kessler-Harris, Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 10-11.

¹⁵² Kessler-Harris, 11. Oddly enough, Kessler-Harris cited Alice Clark's research on the same period as evidence that women and men were mutually dependent: "The idea is seldom encountered," Clark wrote, "that a man supports his wife; husband and wife were then mutually dependent and together supported the children." (7) Perhaps Kessler-Harris meant

the early colonial period, though women could still own land in Massachusetts, they customarily gained it only as dower, bequest, or, for self-supporting unmarried women, by purchase. The purpose of allowing women to own land was to keep them from becoming public charges. Fortunately, custom and law allowed some women access to the economic independence that land could offer.

Married women had more disabilities than rights under English common law. Before Massachusetts codified married women's property rights, common law applied even in cases where common sense would dictate otherwise. Lawe's Resolution of Woman's Rights, published 1632, described the law's affect on married women:

In this consolidation which we call wedlock is a locking together. It is true, that man and wife are one person; but understand in what manner. When a small brook or little river incorporateth with . . . the Thames, the poor rivulet looseth her name; it is carried and recarried with the new associate . . . it possesseth nothing during coverture. A woman, as soon as she is married, is called *covert*; in Latine, *nupta*, -- that is 'veiled;' as it were, clouded and overshadowed: she hath lost her streame. [Furthermore,] all [women] are understood either married or to bee married, and their desires are to their husbands.¹⁵³

A married woman was therefore submerged in her husband's identity, or *feme covert*. Most legal abuses of married women's property resulted from common law's assertion that woman and man became one at marriage and that *one* was the husband.

The assumption underlying Massachusetts property law until well after 1800 was that all women would marry, would be *femes covert*, and would receive the protection society expected husbands to provide. It was only after 1800, when

that women with land were not sufficiently subordinate.

¹⁵³ Dall, Woman's Rights, 35-36.

increasing numbers of women stayed single or refused remarriage in widowhood that legislators considered increasing married women's property rights.¹⁵⁴

Puritan lawmakers scarcely considered that women might need protection other than that which family and community patriarchy provided. Their denial of married women's property rights reflected their belief that if a husband was dishonorable and did not do right by his family, the community could correct his behavior through social opprobrium. The Puritan legal code was not prepared for the havoc that would be wreaked on families by intemperance beyond church-state control, or by speculation and other risky business practices in an increasingly cyclical economy.

Common Law

Under common law, a single woman had the same property rights as a man. When a woman accepted a proposal of marriage, however, her property was frozen: she could not give away any part of it without the consent of her husband-to-be. Should she do so, the gift would be void upon her marriage and its return could be demanded by her husband. A lawsuit brought by a plaintiff who was a single woman was automatically dropped if she married before the suit was settled. If a single woman who had made a will decided to marry, her will was void upon her marriage.¹⁵⁵ Whatever a woman inherited would automatically pass to her

¹⁵⁴ See Lee Chambers-Schiller's Liberty, A Better Husband for an excellent discussion of the Cult of Single Blessedness, whose rise paralleled that of the Cult of Domesticity in the nineteenth century.

¹⁵⁵ Dall, Woman's Rights, 61; Carol E. Jenson, "The Equity Jurisdiction and Married Women's Property in Ante-Bellum America: A Revisionist View," International Journal of Women's Studies (March-April 1979), pp. 150, 149.

husband's control, unless the bequest was accompanied by a "sole and separate use" provision. A working woman might support her husband on her own earnings, but he was empowered to sell, waste, or bequeath away the property she had acquired, even to his mistress or illegitimate children. As Wendell Phillips said, "union was robbery."¹⁵⁶ Most women may not have agreed, because otherwise the majority would not have married. A growing minority, however, preferred to remain single rather than risk their property as well as their independence.

Dower Law

In Massachusetts, married women's property was first governed by common law, which provided for widows' right to dower. Massachusetts dower rights laws severely restricted widows' independence as property owners in the early nineteenth century. Most widows had only a life interest -- not outright ownership -- in one-third of their husbands' estates, which after the widow died was parceled out as the late husband had instructed in his will, or as the court ordered in cases of intestacy. Most widows therefore acted as stewards for the estate, which was intended to support them for life, but which they were not allowed to sell, damage, or otherwise diminish. Accordingly, few dowered widows left wills: their husbands' wills served as the means for bequeathing property, and a woman could claim as her own only her own clothing and personal belongings (and sometimes precious little of that, judging from some husbands' property inventories). In theory, a man could not leave his wife an interest in less than a third of his property. If he did, his widow could petition the

¹⁵⁶ Dall, Woman's Rights, 39, 61, 64-65, 122.

court for her full third, and the court usually acquiesced. That was the situation when Lucy Remington (whose late husband Caleb had willed her nothing, leaving it all to their unborn child) petitioned Probate Court for relief in 1808. The court allowed Lucy a dower portion which Caleb had neglected to provide.¹⁵⁷ Without court-awarded dower, Lucy could have been left destitute and dependent on community charity.

In addition, a woman could not be deprived of her right to a third of her husband's estate by any act of her husband without her consent before the court. If a husband wanted to sell real estate, his wife had to sign a quitclaim before the court, to relinquish her dower rights in the property being sold. If she refused to sign, a purchaser would be unlikely to buy, knowing the property would come with the encumbrance of dower. The widow's "thirds" could be barred only by a premarital agreement, by the desertion of her husband, or by divorce if she were the guilty party. Also, if a third of the real estate would not support a widow for life, she could make "just complaint" to the court and receive relief through a larger portion.¹⁵⁸ If an intestate's estate was exceptionally small, the court might award a larger share without the widow having to petition, as was the case for Orilla Stanley. When her husband died intestate in 1835, he left no real estate and only \$228 in personal estate. Probate records note that the widow was "entitled to her wearing apparel according to

¹⁵⁷ BCP.

¹⁵⁸ Ditz, 244; BCP #2634 (Caleb Remington); George L. Haskins, Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts (New York: Macmillan, 1960), pp. 181-182; Marylynn Salmon, Women and the Law of Property in Early America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), pp. 143-144; Andrew Keyssar, "Widowhood in Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts: A Problem in the History of the Family," Perspectives in American History, 1974, p. 102.

the degree and estate of her said husband; and such further necessities as [the judge should] see fit to order having regard to the family under her care." Judge William Walker allowed her to choose from the estate property to the amount of \$189.16.¹⁵⁹

A widow, a woman who had been feme covert, labored under the legacy of coverture even after the death of her husband, because by law she could not risk the property he had accumulated. She could use it, spend the profits that accrued from it, or even use the profits to accumulate additional property (which she could will, sell or waste) but she could not sell dower lands. As Keyssar points out, "The widow's thirds in real property were a kind of trust fund, designed to give her support while protecting the estate and the line of succession." Also, real estate dower as well as the personal estate that was "necessary for the upholding of life" was protected from the claims of creditors: if the husband died insolvent, the widow still received life use of her third, and after her death, it would be distributed among her husband's creditors.¹⁶⁰ Without the protection of dower law, many widows and orphans would have been destitute.

A few western Massachusetts widows owned property outright, as did single women and married daughters who inherited property with a "sole and separate use" bequest. Some parents, fearing that a wastrel or profligate son-in-law would dissipate the estate and leave a daughter destitute, provided for their daughters to have full, sole and permanent control of the property settled upon them. In addition, some widows used the income from their dower lands to purchase additional real estate in

¹⁵⁹ BCP #5669.

¹⁶⁰ Keyssar, 100-101.

their own names. Also, some women executed antenuptial agreements to control their own property after marriage. After 1840, an increasing number of Berkshire County men made "sole and separate" bequests to their wives and/or daughters (covered in detail in the chapter on women's wills). These possibilities could account for early cases where widows bequeathed property they had not received through dower.

Women who had full control of property left wills to dispose of it.¹⁶¹

Equity

In theory, women about to marry could use the equity system to protect their property. Equity was established to remedy the limitations and inflexibility of common law -- a means of applying common sense to stretch the law as it applied to women's property ownership. In reality, most women knew nothing about equity or the protection it could provide. Use of equity took legal knowledge, foresight, willingness to take a stand on an issue unpopular with many men, and ready cash to retain a lawyer to draw up the necessary documents.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ In Ditz's study of 1820s Wethersfield, CT, the origin of many Berkshire County families, 72% of daughters did inherit land, which was an increase from the 62% of the 1750s-1770s. Ditz, 245.

¹⁶² Though Mary Beard argued that women were sufficiently protected by equity law before passage of married women's property acts, her argument was based on the elitist premise that "everyone" had the necessary knowledge of the law and could afford to hire an attorney. Beard's assumption was that all states provided equity jurisdiction to protect married women's separate property. That assumption, however, was contradicted by her statement that "Rights which prudent parents had long secured for daughters under Equity were now to be extended to all married women as a matter of written law."

Beard's faulty logic lies in the words "prudent parents." First, it cannot be assumed that every woman had living parents, much less prudent ones. Second, it cannot be assumed that parents had the knowledge, desire and/or foresight to protect their daughters through "sole and separate use" bequests. Third, it is clear from the cases cited by women's rights activists and in popular literature that many people, though unaware of equity, knew of abuses

As Mary Upton Ferrin, champion of the Massachusetts Married Women's Property Acts pointed out, not one woman in fifty was aware of the protection offered by equity.¹⁶³ Because the theory did not match reality in providing equal status to male and married female property owners, legal reform was needed.¹⁶⁴ In states with chancery courts, women may have taken advantage of the provisions of equity law. Massachusetts, however, was not one of these. Puritan lawmakers rejected establishment of an equity court system on the premise that if wives held separate property, it would disrupt family life.¹⁶⁵ Caleb Cushing pointed out in 1828 that while women in states with chancery courts could obtain suitable protection for their separate rights, that was not the case in Massachusetts, where "the want of correct information upon the subject has kept alive an illiberal and unfortunate spirit of jealousy toward equity jurisdiction."¹⁶⁶ In Massachusetts, equity was handled by the Supreme Judicial Court. (The name alone is daunting.) And without equity courts and their coterie of specialists in equity law, Massachusetts women lacked even the support of the legal institutions tasked with protecting the weak and the helpless. If we are to believe the words of Massachusetts jurist Joseph Story, it took an

to the property rights of individual married women. Finally, parents' foresight in protecting an inheritance or property owned before marriage could not protect a married woman's future earnings. Mary Beard, Woman as Force in History (New York: Macmillan, 1946), p. 158.

¹⁶³ Elizabeth Cady Stanton et. al., History of Woman Suffrage v. 1 (1881), pp. 209.

¹⁶⁴ Jenson, 145, 147; Norma Basch, "Invisible Women: The Legal Fiction of Marital Unity in Nineteenth-Century America," Feminist Studies V (summer 1979), pp. 351-353.

¹⁶⁵ Warbasse, vi.

¹⁶⁶ Caleb Cushing, "Legal Condition of Women," North American Review (Boston, 1828), p. 353.

exceptionally skilled lawyer to deal with equity's complexities. In his opinion, equity was especially complex, or "a very refined species of logic, which requires great talents to master in all its various distinctions and subtle contrivances."¹⁶⁷ In other words, not just any country lawyer would do: an expert was needed.

Even when it worked properly, equity was hardly a testimony to the abilities of women, because it classified married women with infants, idiots and lunatics.¹⁶⁸ Having secured her fiance's permission to execute an antenuptial agreement to set aside her property for her separate use, a woman was required to turn it over to a trustee, usually male. She could sell or bequeath that property, but she could not manage it without the trustee.¹⁶⁹ If a woman inherited property, the bequest had to stipulate that the female beneficiary was to have sole and separate use before a court would recognize her ability to manage that property. Without the "sole and separate" provision, her inheritance would be turned over to her husband.¹⁷⁰ Under equity, putting property beyond the reach of husbands worked only when the husbands acquiesced, or when testators wrote the "sole and separate" clause into their wills.

"The equity system's assumption that women could not act competently and responsibly in the administration of property," Carol Jenson argues, hardly represented "parity between legal rights of men and of women," despite Beard's

¹⁶⁷ Beard, 126; Joseph Story, Commentaries on Equity Pleadings (Boston: Little, Brown, 1838), p. 11, cited in Jenson, 147.

¹⁶⁸ Jenson, 150; Stanton, 209.

¹⁶⁹ Jenson, 147.

¹⁷⁰ Jenson, 148.

assertion otherwise.¹⁷¹ Jenson sums up equity's efficacy: "The very fact that a woman attempting to protect her property had to seek out an attorney to aid her in negotiating, *with her prospective husband's permission*, special agreements not required of a man," negates Beard's conclusion that equity "did much to equalize the legal situation between men and women." (Emphasis added.) Though nineteenth-century women were expected to be under the control of their husbands, logic suggests that whenever permission is needed, the person with the authority to grant or withhold that permission is a person with the power to abuse his authority. Nineteenth-century women achieved a great step toward autonomy, even within marriage, when they were no longer required by law to seek the permission of their husbands to keep their property separate.

Because women who married promised to love, honor and *obey*, it seems unlikely that any but the most determined would risk losing a partner in exchange for maintaining property rights. One woman wrote a letter to Fanny Wright's Free Enquirer in 1830, describing how she lost a suitor. She had "protracted the negotiation" until she could learn more about her rights as a married woman. She wrote, "My suitor determined he would be kept no longer in abeyance, and married a simple lass who braved all contingencies. But in the meantime I had learned that it was a fearful thing for a female to get married."¹⁷²

The typical woman on the brink of marriage was often too optimistic (as was the fictional Mary Lumly in Charlotte's Daughter) about a prospective husband to

¹⁷¹ Jenson, 150.

¹⁷² Free Enquirer II, ser. 2, #10, January 2, 1830, p. 75, cited in Warbasse, 94.

think he would rob or cheat her, of all people. The popular press's repeated use of the awful examples of corrupt, intemperate and dissipated husbands may have dissuaded some women from marrying, but the majority did marry and did relinquish their rights to whatever property they owned before marriage.

Thus Massachusetts women were at risk: first, because the majority were unaware of the protection they could secure under equity law; second, because there were no special equity courts and consequently few attorneys specializing in equity; third, because some men were not willing to sign away their rights to their prospective brides' property and/or future earnings; and fourth, because some women would have been unwilling to demand such a concession from their prospective bridegrooms. The best protection would be that which was automatically conferred and required no special action on the part of the person in need of protection.

Passage of Massachusetts' Married Women's Property Acts

Around 1830, demand rose for laws to protect married women's property.¹⁷³

In 1829 public opinion "condemned" the lack of property rights for married women:

That the general opinion condemns the law, is apparent from the frequency of instances in which women secure their property; from the growing practice among honorable men . . . of refusing to avail themselves of the legal powers of a husband with regard to property; and the circumstance that judicious, unprejudiced persons invariably advise a woman about to be married, to steps which defeat the law."¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Beard, 158.

¹⁷⁴ "Justice," American Monthly I (Dec. 1829), p. 615, cited in Warbasse, 85.

The passage of the married women's property acts in Massachusetts from 1845 to 1857 was the commonwealth's response to growing pressure for codification of practices that common law and legal precedent had established piecemeal (and without widespread public knowledge) for the protection of married women's property.

Though testators had long provided protection to women's inherited property by bequeathing it with "sole and separate use" provisions (see Chapter 7), those stipulations did not protect, for instance, the earnings of married women.

Dissatisfaction with English common law after the Revolution prompted new, strictly "American" laws,¹⁷⁵ though legislators dragged their feet decade after decade regarding protection of married women's property, undoubtedly leery of winning the votes of men whose nonvoting wives would wrest property from their husbands' control. They eventually dealt with the problem by stipulating that the new laws would apply only to women married after the laws were enacted, because "the passage of a new law never annuls *pre-existing contracts*."¹⁷⁶

Aside from common law, in the early years of the republic, Massachusetts women were allowed one protection for their property rights. Starting in 1787, a married woman could be treated as feme sole after abandonment by her husband, as long as he had left the state. (This was no comfort to the families whose profligate

¹⁷⁵ Peggy Rabkin, "Origins of Law Reform: The Social Significance of the Nineteenth-Century Codification Movement and its Contribution to the Passage of the Early [New York] Married Women's Property Acts," *Buffalo Law Review* v. 24, #3 (spring 1975), p. 707.

¹⁷⁶ Dall, *Woman's Rights*, 122. Two sisters, one married before 1845 and the other married a year later, had different property rights under the 1845 Massachusetts law; that is to say, the sister who married earlier would have none, while the sister who married later would have all the protection the new law allowed. (That provision was later amended.)

fathers returned periodically to loot the household.) Previously, a married woman could achieve feme sole status in Massachusetts only by petitioning the General Court.¹⁷⁷ Though it would be decades before another change would occur, attitudes toward married women's property continued to evolve. Tapping Reeve, who founded the first law school in America, authored an 1816 law book on domestic relations, in which he denied the unity of spouses -- but asserted that marriage was a contract between unequal partners: one of the stronger sex and one of the weaker sex.¹⁷⁸

Another small change occurred in 1837, when it was decreed that a married woman could act as fiduciary (an administratrix or executrix) in probate without the consent of her husband. This change indicated acceptance of women being as capable married as they had been single. Perhaps the increase in men's losing their savings, investments and livelihoods in the increasingly cyclical capitalist economy prompted recognition of women's ability to husband resources.

The year 1845 brought two significant reforms. By antenuptial contract, a wife could hold separate property and by bequest she could receive property for her separate use without a trustee, with the same rights and liabilities as if she were unmarried, as long as she did not use that property in trade or commerce. She could, however, invest in real estate, U.S., state or corporation stock, personal securities or notes, or in furniture for her own use. Either a prenuptial contract or an antenuptial settlement was considered a bar to dower.

¹⁷⁷ Warbasse, 190; Charles Almy Jr. & Horace W. Fuller, The Law of Married Women (Boston: 1878), p. vi.

¹⁷⁸ Basch, 352.

In 1846, a new law allowed Massachusetts' married women to acknowledge receipt or make deposits of money, and even more significantly, a married woman could hold the profits of her own work and labor to her own separate use.¹⁷⁹ This law recognized the increasing numbers of employed married women in a country where "several million women earn their own livelihood."¹⁸⁰ The 1846 law was Massachusetts' first property act providing protection to employed but unpropertied working-class women.

These were the first significant steps toward allowing married women independent control of their own assets without the intervention of an attorney or the courts. Those laws began the extension of property rights to all married women in Massachusetts, but more help was yet to come.

In 1848, Mary Upton Ferrin of Salem began her crusade for relief from the disabilities inflicted on women by the residue of common law. Abused by her husband, she consulted a lawyer and learned that if she divorced him, her property would be his, and she could retain her portable property only if she could prove it had been loaned to her. Encouraged by other women, she asked state senator Benjamin Pitkin for help in drawing up a petition for the legislature to change the laws. Pitkin (later Judge Pitkin) responded:

¹⁷⁹ Warbasse, 190; Almy, vi; Morris, 171, 186; Acts and Resolves (Boston: 1845), pp. 531-532; Joel Prentiss Bishop, Commentaries on the Law of Married Women (Boston: Little, Brown, 1873), v. 1, p. 360; Acts and Resolves (Boston: 1846), p. 139; Massachusetts General Laws Annotated v. 33, pp. 300, 303, 317, 339, 348, 350, 384, 389.

¹⁸⁰ Edward E. Hale letter to Caroline H. Dall, February 7, 1855, Caroline Healey Dall Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston (hereafter CHD Papers, MHS); UMass-Amherst microfilm #7117.

The law is very well as it is regarding the property of married women. Women are not capable of taking care of their own property; they never ought have control of it. There is already a law by which a woman can have her property secured to her.¹⁸¹

Though Ferrin pointed out that "not one woman in fifty" knew there was such a law, Pitkin maintained that their ignorance was not the fault of the legislature. Thus rebuffed, Ferrin proceeded anyway, noting that younger women were more willing to agitate for change than those whose years and experience had calloused them.¹⁸²

Several Unitarian ministers serving in the legislature presented the Ferrin petitions yearly from 1848 through 1853. Others were discussing women's property rights, also. Ralph Waldo Emerson noted in 1851 on the day of the Women's Convention in Worcester that "as long as they have not equal rights of property & right of voting, they are not on a right footing." Though Emerson frequently took a patronizing tone toward women, he did understand that the time had come to enlarge women's rights, and that when a women married, "the parties should as regards property, go into a partnership full or limited, but explicit & recorded."¹⁸³

Massachusetts took no action until the Know Nothings came to power in 1855 and promptly -- without the pressure of a petition -- passed a bill giving women the control of their own property.¹⁸⁴ Emerson approved, noting, "The policy of

¹⁸¹ Stanton, 208-209.

¹⁸² Stanton, 209.

¹⁸³ Ralph Waldo Emerson, Emerson in His Journals, Joel Porte, ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 431 & 463.

¹⁸⁴ Stanton, 208-211.

defending their property is good; and if the women demand votes, offices, & political equality . . . refuse it not. Certainly all my points would be sooner carried in the state if women voted."¹⁸⁵ Once again, property rights and voting were mentioned in the same breath.

In mid-April 1855, after reading a bill relating to playing hand-organs in the streets, Charles Phelps Huntington (Northampton) of the House Judiciary Committee introduced a bill to protect the property of married women,

providing that real and personal property inherited or possessed by any married woman shall remain her sole and separate property, notwithstanding her marriage, and not be subject to the disposal of her husband, or liable for his debts. Also releasing the husband from any obligations for cause of action which originated against the wife before her marriage.¹⁸⁶

By the time the bill reached the Senate about ten days later, Elihu Baker (Medford) reported that it was "inexpedient to legislate with regard to married women holding property independent of their husbands," and that the "house bill relating to the rights of married women ought not to pass."¹⁸⁷ Though Senator Baker either withheld his support or thought it unlikely that the bill would pass, a followup report from Andrew Richmond (Adams) of the Senate Judiciary Committee a day later indicated that "the

¹⁸⁵ Emerson, 463. Property rights and suffrage were almost invariably linked with the rallying cry of "taxation without representation." Women who protested the taxation of their property repeatedly used that expression. Perhaps the tax relief provided widows and single women with little property (exempting the first \$500 in property, if the woman requested the exemption) was based on just that concept. Women's tax protests are noted elsewhere.

¹⁸⁶ Boston Post, April 13, 1855, "Massachusetts Legislature," p. 1. Committee appointments, Boston Post, January 9 & January 11, 1855.

¹⁸⁷ Boston Post, April 24, 1855, "Massachusetts Legislature," p. 4.

house acts relating to the property of married women . . . ought to pass."¹⁸⁸ Why there was an apparent turnaround is unknown. Perhaps the bill's sponsors forced additional support by holding it until near the end of the session, then trading their support on others' pet projects in exchange for support of the bill to protect the property of married women, and passing it at the same time as a number of local bills "of undebatable character." By April 30, the newspaper reported that the Senate had passed the bill to be engrossed and on May 3, the House had passed it to be enacted. The Governor signed it into law on May 5.¹⁸⁹ According to Caroline H. Dall's assessment, the 1855 legislature "had been more just to women than any previous Legislature."¹⁹⁰

The 1855 Married Women's Property Act was more comprehensive than the Boston Post reported. It allowed married women to engage in contracts on their own account, to make wills, to sue and be sued. It also provided that pre-marital property and property received through descent, devise or bequest should be a woman's separate property independent of her husband's control, and not liable for his debts. In 1857 those provisions were extended to "all women then married," as well as those

¹⁸⁸ Boston Post, April 25, 1855, "Massachusetts Legislature," p. 4.

¹⁸⁹ Boston Post, April 30 and May 3, 1855, "Massachusetts Legislature," p. 4; Acts and Resolves Passed by the General Court of Massachusetts, in the Year 1855 (Boston: 1855), pp.710-711.

¹⁹⁰ Boston Evening Telegram, September 19, 1855, Women's Rights Convention, clipping in CHD scrapbook #7: CHD Papers, MHS.

yet to marry. The 1857 law also allowed transfers of property from husband to wife, a previously verboten tactic for concealing assets from creditors.¹⁹¹

The question of why the Know-Nothing legislature made such dramatic changes to protect married women's property in 1855 has yet to be adequately answered. The legislature's judiciary committees included several allies of women, but they were hardly representative of the legislature as a whole. Andrew Richmond was a Yale graduate. Charles Phelps Huntington (later Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Justice Huntington) was a member of Harvard's class of 1822, a bank president and former newspaper owner. One of his speeches described common law's restrictions on married women: coverture, obscuring a woman "like a dew drop swallowed up by a sunbeam," and the rule of thumb, a "shame of the law" that should be pictured on the shield of the common law as "a happy family, with the Baron, in presence of his children, beating his feme, with a stick no bigger than his thumb."¹⁹² Huntington's sarcasm reveals disgust with the law regarding married women; his support of the married women's property act shows him to be ally to women. His letters, furthermore, praised his daughter for her self-confidence and disdained the orthodox Congregational clergy's "hypocrisy, bigotry, exclusive creed, pharisaic spirit . . . intolerant and prosecuting temper," calling them "about as poor a

¹⁹¹ Henry H. Sprague, Women Under the Law of Massachusetts: Their Rights, Privileges, and Disabilities (Boston: Little, Brown, 1903), p. 10; Acts and Resolves (Boston: 1855), pp. 710-711); Massachusetts General Laws Annotated v. 33, pp. 300, 303, 317, 339, 348, 350, 384, 389.

¹⁹² Charles Phelps Huntington Lyceum Lecture, "Glance at the Law," January 17, 1838, pp. 5-6: Box 17, folder 17, Porter Phelps Huntington Papers, Special Collections, Amherst College (hereafter PPH: AC).

commentary upon the meek loving charitable and gentle spirit of Christianity as could well be got up."¹⁹³ (When Huntington criticized the Congregational clergy, he criticized one segment of the driving force behind the cult of domesticity, as well as those who sought to reestablish the Puritan-Yankee status quo.)

Why did other members of the 1855 Know Nothing legislature support the protection of married women's property? The increasing numbers of women who owned property and the numbers of testators both male and female who willed property to women with "sole and separate use" provisions indicates that legislators were merely codifying what was already a general practice. Furthermore, though the evidence is circumstantial, the demographics of the other legislators may provide a clue. Bills passed that year included an amazing amount of social legislation, much of it to benefit the underprivileged -- and most of the 1855 legislators themselves were substantially less privileged, by several measures, than their predecessors. According to Virginia Cadwell Purdy, the wealthy urban lawyers and merchants who generally made up the political leadership of the state were conspicuously absent from the legislature in 1855. There were twice as many propertyless legislators in 1855 than there had been in 1850. The legislature's per capita wealth in 1855 was only 39% of that of 1850, and more of the wealth was nonfarm wealth owned by artisans, clergy, teachers, physicians, architects and builders. They were not only less prosperous and therefore less supportive of the status quo than their predecessors,

¹⁹³ Charles Phelps Huntington to Fanny Huntington, 1846, Box 17, folder 5; CPH to Frederick Dan Huntington, 1858, Box 17, folder 4; PPH: AC.

they were also younger: twice as many were under 35, and half as many were over 55.¹⁹⁴

The Know Nothings passed several bills for debtors' relief: they abolished imprisonment for debt except in cases where the debtor concealed assets from creditors -- a cause championed by Charles Phelps Huntington as early as 1831.¹⁹⁵ The Married Women's Property Act of 1855 allowed a family to shield some of its assets from creditors. Legislators' own level of prosperity is indicated by their bill to allow themselves to be paid monthly, instead of at the end of the term, a necessity "for men who had left small businesses and trades to reform the state." The Boston Atlas noted that the Know Nothings "believe there is no evil under the sun that legislation cannot touch."¹⁹⁶ The Know Nothings came to power with a mandate to change the status quo, including debtor laws. Debt was a burden that class knew all too well. Perhaps they acted in their own self-interest when they passed the Married Women's Property Act -- not only to protect wives from the depredations of intemperate husbands, but also to protect some of every family's assets from creditors. In this act, they were able to express support of both temperance (protecting a wife's assets from an intemperate husband) and debt relief, two subjects popular with voters. Protestant clergymen who served as legislators could return

¹⁹⁴ Virginia Cadwell Purdy, Portrait of a Know-Nothing Legislature: The Massachusetts General Court of 1855 (doctoral dissertation, George Washington University, 1970), (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989), pp. 118-119, 121, 126, 167, 220, 229.

¹⁹⁵ CPH lecture, "Imprisonment for Debt," January 1831, Box 17, folder 18, PPH-AC.

¹⁹⁶ Purdy, 235.

home and assure their female parishioners, the "mainstay" of their churches,¹⁹⁷ that the legislature had acted in their behalf.

The year 1855 was "an end to the Brahmin stranglehold over political life" and a "new deal for the common people of Massachusetts," who "wanted certain luxuries for the few made available to all."¹⁹⁸ It also may have satisfied voters disgusted with previous administrations' inability or unwillingness to enact legislation designed to benefit the commoners, including debtors, women, and children. As Carl Degler points out, "Men may have wives whose property they covet, but they also have daughters and mothers whose property they desire to protect."¹⁹⁹ Many reform movements were based on enlightened self-interest, and the protection of married women's (and therefore families') property was a result of that phenomenon.²⁰⁰

From those beginnings, Massachusetts proceeded to codify improvements in married women's property laws, so that by 1861, Caroline Dall could characterize Massachusetts' legislation as leaving very little to be desired except suffrage.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ Rev. H.K. Rowe quoted in Elisabeth Anthony Dexter, Career Women of America: 1776-1840 (Clifton, NJ: Augustus M. Kelley 1972 reprint of 1950 ed.), p. 68.

¹⁹⁸ John R. Mulkern, The Know-Nothing Party in Massachusetts (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990), pp. 93, 107-108.

¹⁹⁹ Carl N. Degler, "Woman as Force in History by Mary Beard," Daedalus 103 #1 (Winter 1973), p. 71.

²⁰⁰ It seems prudent to attribute the term "enlightened self-interest" to whomever first said it, but that source as yet remains elusive, and I cannot claim credit for it myself.

²⁰¹ Dall, Woman's Rights, 125, 132.

Tax Protests

As more women acquired property, they agitated for the right to vote. Increasing numbers of women, by filling the historical prerequisite of property ownership, were maneuvering into position for demanding suffrage on the basis of "no taxation without representation." As early as 1828, discussions of the legal condition of women pointed out that the property of unmarried women was "taxed without being represented." Though the author allowed, "The maxim, that taxation and representation should go hand in hand, is most salutary, but no general maxim in morals is free from exception or qualification."²⁰² He surely thought that women were an exception to that general rule. In 1855, legislator Elihu Baker (Medford) said that if legislative "representation should be made to depend on taxation, then women who pay taxes should be allowed to vote."²⁰³ A member of the Know-Nothing legislature's Senate Judiciary Committee, he supported women's rights.

By midcentury, some women were given tax relief: women with few assets could request a tax abatement on \$500 worth of property.²⁰⁴ Other women bridled at having to hand over their assets to support civil schemes in which they had no say.

In 1856, a furious Lydia Maria Child wrote to attorney Ellis Gray Loring, "I am in a state of high indignation, because the assessors here have taxed us the

²⁰² Caleb Cushing, "Legal Condition of Women," North American Review (Boston: 1828), p. 319. Could it be that when there were very few unmarried adult women, taxation of women's property without representation was a small issue -- but when the numbers increased to an alarming percentage of the adult female population, legislators took heed of women's demands and sought to make marriage less hazardous?

²⁰³ Boston Post, April 10, 1855, "Massachusetts Legislature," p. 4.

²⁰⁴ This phenomenon shows up with no explanation in some town tax lists of the 1850s.

enormous sum of \$26.10 for the Northampton farm . . ." The town, faced with an expensive lawsuit and the cost of a new high school, needed additional funds. "I was not permitted to vote about the extravagant building, or the needless law-suit," Child fumed in high dudgeon, "yet here am I called upon to pay for them, out of my small means. I mean to petition the Legislature to exempt me from taxes, or grant me the privilege of voting. Oh what a sex you are! It's time you were turned out of office. High time. You've been captains long enough. It's our turn now."²⁰⁵ This tirade was unusual because Child, though an abolitionist and sensitive to women's issues, did not as a general rule permit herself to become embroiled in the early women's rights crusade. When the issue hit her in the pocketbook, however, her indignation knew no bounds. She may have been especially sensitive because earlier that year she had written her will, and as a married woman, had been required to have her husband sign it in order for it to be legal.²⁰⁶

In 1857, Lucy Stone returned her tax bill unpaid, stating unequivocally, "My reason for so doing is, that women suffer taxation, and yet have no representation, which is not only unjust to one half of the adult population, but is contrary to our theory of government . . ." Her household goods were sold at auction for her

²⁰⁵ Lydia Maria Child, Lydia Maria Child: Selected Letters, 1817-1880, Milton Meltzer, Patricia G. Holland and Francine Krasno, eds. (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), p. 282.

²⁰⁶ Child, 279. By 1866, however, Child's understanding of suffrage issues had expanded further than her purse. After she noted in a letter to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, that "'taxation without representation' is contrary to the principles on which our republic was founded," she added, "Women are imprisoned and hung by the laws, and therefore they have a right to a voice in making the laws." Child, 468.

trouble.²⁰⁷ But her protest was noted, and she was not the only tax protestor. For two decades Dr. Harriot Hunt, a Bostonian by birth and education, annually protested to the Boston assessors that she was being taxed unfairly because she was not allowed to vote. Though she did not allow the situation to go as far as Stone did, being unwilling to let her household goods be auctioned, she did register her complaint, which was regularly published in the Boston newspapers. As Caroline Dall pointed out, however, one woman's protest was barely heard, but if "five thousand female property-holders, calling their own caucus, and storming City Hall with well-concerted words, would compel any government to listen."²⁰⁸ The two thousand women and men who petitioned in 1853 for women's rights may have attracted some attention. Harriet H. Robinson pointed out in 1881 that "'Taxation without representation is tyranny' has been ding-donged into the ears of the men of Massachusetts for the last thirty years," and suggested that "By and by, perhaps, they will begin to understand what it means."²⁰⁹ Thus women used their increasing property ownership as a basis for demanding the right to vote. As a traditional prerequisite for enfranchisement, property, held in women's hands, moved women toward suffrage. Property also gave women a degree of freedom they lacked without assets. It was not necessary, however, for a woman to own property in order to

²⁰⁷ Kerr, 103.

²⁰⁸ Dall, Woman's Rights, 149; Notable American Women v. 2, p. 236.

²⁰⁹ Harriet H. Robinson, Massachusetts in the Woman Suffrage Movement (Boston: 1881), pp. 232, 215-216.

maximize her freedom. The next chapter examines one of women's alternative means of achieving independence or autonomy from men.

CHAPTER 6

FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

A demographic revolution may have increased women's autonomy.

Households headed by unpropertied as well as propertied women were not unknown in Massachusetts before the nineteenth century, but they grew increasingly more common from early-to mid-century. The Arms sisters' household was typical of those headed by women. The gender balance of female-headed households was more heavily female than a "normal" male-headed household with one male, the father, husband, or brother "missing." To judge from the gender balance of women's households, female-headed households systematically excluded adult males.

Gender Ratio

From 1800 to 1860 an increasing proportion of the population in these western Massachusetts sample towns lived in households headed by women. Furthermore, those households contained more females in midcentury than they had earlier. As more women congregated in households of their own, they became a more visible phenomenon. The significance of this phenomenon lies not in the numbers, which were small, but in the fact that it not only endured but grew over the sixty years studied. For whatever reason, more women headed their own households in each decade in western Massachusetts from 1800 to 1860, and more women chose to live in households headed by women, as the following charts will show.

Chart 11. Population in Female-Headed Households, 1800-1860

	Population		Gender Ratio	
	n	%	♂:♀	♂:100♀
1800	351	2.1%	119:232	51:100
1820	668	3.6%	230:438	53:100
1850	1711	4.9%	494:1219	40:100
1860	1745	6%	513:1232	42:100

Chart 11. Population in Female-Headed Households, 1800-1860. From U.S. Census, 1800, 1820, 1850, 1860 for 11 sample towns.

Perhaps the increasing number of women holding themselves separate from men, whether by choice or by the perceived necessity to protect themselves from loss of liberty and/or property, influenced male legislators later in the century to increase married women's property rights. As the number of women who held themselves separate increased, there was also an increasing possibility that male legislators knew women who did so -- and knew also why they did so.

It was thus not unusual for women such as the Arms mother and daughters to band together for mutual aid and comfort in a male-dominated world. They were not the only women who minimized the presence of males in their households. Most households headed by women between 1800 and 1820 in western Massachusetts were primarily female. A comparison of the overall gender balance in eleven western

Massachusetts towns with the gender balance of the female-headed households yielded the information in the following chart:

Chart 12. Gender Balance in Households Headed by Women²¹⁰

	1800	1820	1850
Female-headed households	70	167	388
Ratio Males : Females in "	51:100	53:100	40:100
N =	119:232	230:438	494:1219

Chart 12. Gender Balance in Households Headed by Women. From U.S. Census for 11 sample towns.

Even though the total population in the towns studied was more or less evenly distributed between male and female, female-headed households contained two to two-and-a-half times as many females as males. "Keeping Old Maids' Hall" was not unusual for women. Furthermore, simply adding the hypothetical "missing male," one husband/father per female-headed household, (# households + # males already in those households) would still yield a sizable "surplus" of females in female-headed households: 43 females in 1800, 218 in 1820, and 339 in 1850. The surplus increased at a higher rate (100%) than the increase in those towns' population (15%). In short, males were substantially underrepresented in female-headed households, and that pattern grew more pronounced from 1800 to 1860. This may be statistical evidence for what Carroll Smith-Rosenberg wrote about in "The Female World of Love and Ritual," evidence of women's unwillingness to admit men, members of "an alien group," to their households.²¹¹ Though Smith-Rosenberg equated spinsterhood

²¹⁰ 1800, 1820 & 1850 U.S. Censuses for Dalton, Sheffield, Lanesborough, Pittsfield, Stockbridge, Northampton, Goshen, Granby, Blandford, Ashfield and Deerfield.

²¹¹ Smith-Rosenberg, Disorderly Conduct, p. 75.

with economic dependence, women were not necessarily dependent on men.²¹²

Apart from the sex ratio, these women-centered households would be invisible without "disaggregating" census data. "Disaggregating evidence," according to Carole Turbin, "paints a more subtle picture . . . and reveals fine distinctions" that would otherwise remain hidden. In fact, the assumption that women were dependent on men misrepresents the many single women and widows who supported themselves.²¹³

The Arms sisters, though single, fit the pattern of households headed by women. By excluding men from their households the same way the Deerfield "young ladies" excluded men from their literary society, women householders exercised one of the rights to autonomy their society permitted them: that of refusing to marry, or in the case of widows, to remarry. As Helen Kessler points out, women "drew together to share the trials they had to bear."²¹⁴ Women supported each other in illness and in childbirth, even nursing each others' children when the need arose. During those times women suffered the potential intrusion of only two men: the minister and the physician -- and often not even the latter if there was a midwife to guide the mother through the birth process.²¹⁵ It wasn't just the Arms sisters who created their own society of women. As Carroll Smith-Rosenberg argues, there was a "specifically female" subculture based on females' friendships and homosocial

²¹² Smith-Rosenberg, Disorderly Conduct, p. 81.

²¹³ Carole Turbin, Working Women of Collar City: Gender, Class and Community in Troy, New York, 1864-86 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), p. 12.

²¹⁴ Helen Roelker Kessler, 65.

²¹⁵ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Good Wives (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 132; Ulrich, A Midwife's Tale (New York: Random House, 1991), p. 28.

networks, which were institutionalized around the rituals attached to milestones in women's lives. Women, whether single or married,

revealed their deepest feelings to one another, helped one another with the burdens of housewifery and motherhood, nursed one another's sick, and mourned for one another's dead. It was a world in which men made only a shadowy appearance. Female rituals rigorously excluded male kith and kin, rituals so secret that men had little knowledge of them, so pervasive that they patterned women's lives from birth to death.²¹⁶

Women's bonds with other women characterized their social relationships whether they were old maids in Massachusetts or emigrants on the Overland Trail. As John Faragher points out, "As for both men and women, the strongest and most significant social connections, that is, those connections linking them with social units larger than the family, were accomplished not by couples, but by same-sex groupings: in male gatherings from working bees to local elections, and in female communications at quiltings or around the delivery bed."²¹⁷

Women gave each other financial support as well as psychosocial support. Women with property favored other women as beneficiaries when they wrote their wills. In a sample of 234 Berkshire County wills where the female authors' marital status was stated or implied, 60% of the 83 single women favored other women -- their mothers, sisters, and daughters -- as beneficiaries. Overall, 46% of testatrices favored women, 34% favored men, and 20% stipulated equal division of property

²¹⁶ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective 2d edition, Michael Gordon, ed. (New York: St. Martin's, 1978), p. 339; Disorderly Conduct (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 28.

²¹⁷ John Mack Faragher, Men and Women on the Overland Trail (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 180.

between male and female beneficiaries.²¹⁸ Single women ensured that other women would have the protection property provided -- and which allowed other women to remain single if they chose.

Sarah Grimké argued that, "Man never can legislate justly for woman because 'he has never entered the world to which she belongs.'"²¹⁹ Caroline Dall echoed that sentiment in 1861, noting that "it is a woman's judgment in matters that concern women that the world demands."²²⁰ Nineteenth-century women understood that the values and culture of women were strikingly different from the culture of men. Smith-Rosenberg understands that women were autonomous within the female world²²¹; some western Massachusetts women made life choices to increase their own autonomy by allying themselves with women rather than with men. Because "conventional thinking about family relations," according to Gerald McFarland, "put the husband's needs first" in the nineteenth century, and because some women were not willing to be less than equal partners in marriage, they maximized their autonomy by refusing to marry.²²²

Nineteenth-century women were not as dependent on men as twentieth-century historians have generally assumed. To paraphrase Ava Baron, convention defines

²¹⁸ See Chapter 7, Chart 20.

²¹⁹ Grimké, 162.

²²⁰ Dall, Woman's Rights, viii.

²²¹ Linda Gordon, "U.S. Women's History," The New American History, Eric Foner, ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), p. 191.

²²² Gerald W. McFarland, A Scattered People: An American Family Moves West (New York: Pantheon, 1986), p. 154.

women primarily as wives, mothers, or daughters -- or in relation to their family ties and/or relationship to men -- whereas men are defined as workers or economic or political units.²²³ This illogical dichotomy limits the historical view of both women and men, because both were members of families and both contributed economically. This dichotomy is also too narrow to admit the women who lived outside of the traditional male-dominated nineteenth-century household. Though independent women may have been a minority, their significance lies in their example as an option available to all women.

Householders Not Necessarily Landowners

Few western Massachusetts women who were heads-of-households also owned real estate. A comparison of the census lists of women heads-of-households with the lists of women taxpayers revealed a surprisingly low correlation between the two: in nine towns studied, slightly more than a third of women householders were also owners of realty (21 of 62 or 34% in 1800 and 31 of 87 or 36% in 1820). In the six towns with equivalent information available for 1850 and 1860, an even lower percentage of women heads-of-households owned real estate (60 of 388 or 15% in

²²³ Ava Baron, "Gender and Labor History," Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor, Ava Baron, ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 7.

1850 and 77 of 494 or 16% in 1860). In other words, many women who were heads of independent households did not own land or any other taxable property.

Occupations

Though their occupations may have been underreported, many women householders were employed. As Linda Gordon points out, "All women worked for a living." Middle-class women in rural western Massachusetts sold, bartered and traded their services as needleworkers. Sarah Snell Bryant, wife of Cummington physician Peter Bryant, sewed, spun, wove, and made shoes and bonnets to augment the family income or as barter for other goods or services after her husband's doctoring business failed in Plainfield.²²⁴ As her son said, "My mother was a careful economist, which the circumstances of her family compelled her to be, and by which she made some amends for my father's want of attention to the main chance. His patients generally paid him whatever they pleased, if ever so little, so that he could not by any means be called a thriving man."²²⁵ Though Dr. Bryant practiced a

²²⁴ Sarah Snell Bryant diaries (Houghton Library, Harvard University: microfilm at Old Sturbridge Village Research Library): January 22, 27, 30, March 16, May 15, 18, 22, 23, 24*, 26, June 4*, 29, July 4, August 13, September 5, 8, 13, October 10*, 17, November 1, 27, 1798; Letters of William Cullen Bryant, William Cullen Bryant II and Thomas G. Voss, eds., vol. 1 (1809-1836), p. 9. Photo p. 248-249.

* Sarah Snell Bryant sewed greatcoats and gowns for several members of the Joy family at a time when they were living at "Mr. Joy's," and after moving to "Bisbe's house," her sewing for the Joys slowed to the occasional gown and she made a bonnet for Mrs. Bisbe; she may have been paying their rent by making their landlords' clothes. A month before her third child, Cyrus, was born, Polly Clark came to live with the Bryants, and while Polly did the heavy housework such as washing, Sarah sewed for Polly. Having "help" did not always involve purely a cash transaction; it may have included the barter of goods for services.

²²⁵ Parke Godwin, Biography of William Cullen Bryant, v. 1 (New York: 1883), pp. 3-4.



Illustration 5. Sarah Snell Bryant.

potentially lucrative profession, Sarah Snell Bryant did needlework to compensate for her husband's inability to collect fees. An assumption that middle-class women did not have to work for money is not necessarily correct.²²⁶

Employees and Entrepreneurs

Like Sarah Snell Bryant, many women found work by word-of-mouth. Few advertisements solicited women workers in Pittsfield from 1800 to 1820. While Pittsfield Suns had ads for male apprentices or journeymen, women were not mentioned except as runaways. The only women mentioned in the 1820 ads, in fact, were the Misses Peters, who were looking for students for their female academy and Pittsfield milliners Margaret Best and Abigail Ives. Spot checks of 1800, 1810, 1820,

²²⁶ Barbara Welter's description of the cult of true womanhood should be seen for what it is: an ideal promoted by conservative ideologues -- ministers, physicians, and authors of prescriptive works -- whose pecuniary interests depended on women being pious, submissive, and domestic. If the majority of women had been pious, submissive, and domestic, there would have been no need to exhort them to be that way. Perhaps the livelihood of those conservative men was threatened by middle-class women's increasing independence. Welter's use of the word "cult" is appropriate for a group whose point of view does not follow that of the mainstream -- who may have been too practical or too poor to expect women to not work. (See Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860.") As Linda Gordon points out, how women do act is not necessarily the same as how women should act, because few people conform to ideal models. (Gordon, 190 & 194.) If middle-class women did fit the ideal, there would have been no need to market it.

1830 & 1860 issues of the Sun showed almost no advertisements from or about women. Because the census shows that women were employed in manufacturing and other jobs in Pittsfield in the early to mid-nineteenth century, women must have learned of jobs through means other than newspaper advertising. According to Edith Abbott, there were more than 100 industrial occupations open to women from 1820 to 1840, some of which were available in Pittsfield and Northampton between 1800 and 1860, if not in the smaller towns.²²⁷ Also, according to Richard Bernard and Maris Vinovskis, "probably one out of four Massachusetts females born in this country once taught school."²²⁸ When Virginia Penny surveyed employers in 1860, she was able to create a "cyclopedia" describing more than 500 jobs women might do.²²⁹

There was a marked increase in wage-earning women after the New England textile industry expanded in the early 1800s. Unmarried Yankee women wage-earners enjoyed considerable freedom in their spending. Women who earned their own money enjoyed more autonomy in their use of money than did women without wages of their own. Factory work, as Harriet Hanson Robinson pointed out, was a real boon to single women and widows who might otherwise have been dependent on relatives. "From a condition of almost pauperism they were placed at once above want," Robinson wrote. "They could earn money and spend it as they pleased. They could gratify their tastes and desires without restraint and without rendering an

²²⁷ Edith Abbott, Women in Industry (New York: Appleton, 1924), p. 66.

²²⁸ Richard Bernard and Maris Vinovskis, "The Female School Teacher in Ante-Bellum Massachusetts," Journal of Social History v. 10 #3 (March 1977), p. 333.

²²⁹ Virginia Penny, The Employment of Women: A Cyclopedia of Women's Work (Boston: 1863).

account to anybody."²³⁰ Money was important in establishing autonomy and money was an issues in some marriages, as well as in some women's decision not to marry. One woman identified as an old maid wrote, "I think it is degrading to the conscious dignity of a woman of sense and discretion to be compelled to ask of her husband the money necessary to provide for the wants of her family. I never like to see a woman compelled, not only to ask for money, but to tell in what way she intends to appropriate it. I never heard but one feeling expressed by women on this subject." And that feeling was unfailingly negative.²³¹

A glance at the 1860 census for Pittsfield shows how nonlandowning as well as some landowning women earned their living: washerwoman (8), tailoress (6), nurse (3), operative, dyer, weaver (2), spinner, cloth dresser (2), seamstress (12), cook (3), dressmaker (5), boardinghouse keeper (6), milliner (3), teacher, housekeeper, liquor seller, domestic. This should not be considered a complete list. The fact that only one woman was listed as a domestic or a housekeeper or a teacher in the county seat, one of the larger and more prosperous towns of the county, is evidence that some categories of women's employment were undercounted. Furthermore, several Pittsfield businesswomen whose credit was rated by Dun and Company in 1860 do not appear on the census list as milliners identified by Dun in this town for the same

²³⁰ Quoted by Dexter, 215.

²³¹ Susan W. Jewett, "An Old Maid's Reflections on Woman's Rights," Ladies' Repository 14 (April 1854), p. 163.

year.²³² Male census enumerators may have overlooked women working in trades not generally patronized by males.

On the other hand, some women in nontraditional careers were included in census listings -- possibly an advantage of the novelty of their position. Theodosia Herrick worked as a paper hanger, traditionally a trade practiced by men. She entered that profession in 1815 when working for Mrs. Thomas Gold, who had engaged a professional paper hanger who "was more devoted to the blandishments of the village tavern than to the pursuit of his trade." "Dosia" Herrick was still working as a paper hanger in 1873, when she was 79.²³³ The larger population of the county seat, with its concentration of prosperous professionals, provided employment opportunities to women such as Theodosia Herrick and others dependent on wage labor for their financial support.

As early as 1830, women engaged in factory labor in Berkshire County, where many towns had good millsites on the fall line of various branches of the Housatonic, Green, and Swift Rivers. Though their average daily wage was only a quarter to a third of men's, 911 women and girls worked in mills and factories that made cotton, woolen, calico, flannel and satinet cloth, clothing, hats, stocks, chairs, paper, shoes and pails, for 30¢ to 50¢ a day, or \$1.80 to \$3.00 per week when the mills ran six

²³² Dun & Co., pp. 150 & 208, 210, 188 & 312 (Mary A. Chapman, Jane Hathaway, Almira Overhuyser.)

²³³ The Berkshire Hills (January 1905), p. 39. Though paperhanging was a nontraditional occupation for women, it was included in Penny, p. 465, as something women could do.

days a week.²³⁴ Roughly five percent of the female population of Berkshire County was therefore employed in a mill or factory at that time.²³⁵

In smaller, less diversified milltowns, wage labor was available. In 1860 Dalton, after the woolen mills shut down, women found employment in paper mills. The census, which may have underreported women's occupations, listed 73 employed women in a population of 1243. Roughly ten percent of Dalton's female population worked for wages that year. Their occupations are listed in the chart below:

Chart 13. Occupations of Dalton Women, 1860

Schoolteachers	3
Dressmakers	3
Milliners	2
Domestics	20
Paper Mill Operatives	45

Chart 13. Occupations of Dalton Women, 1860. U.S. Census.

Dalton's thriving paper industry, led by the Crane family's paper mills, employed the majority (45/73 or 62%) of women who worked for wages in Dalton in 1860. In addition, a number of the women who worked as domestics were employed by mill owners' families. By 1860, paper mills were "the only game in town" in Dalton.

Though Dalton previously had woolen mills, that employment opportunity shrank after Ashuelot Woolen Company went bankrupt in 1842 and Dalton Woolen

²³⁴ Secretary of the Treasury, Documents Relative to the Manufactures in the United States . . . , vol. 1 (New York: 1832), pp. 127, 131, 133, 135, 137, 139, 143, 145, 147, 149, 153, 155, 157.

²³⁵ Jesse Chickering, A Statistical View of the Population of Massachusetts, From 1765 to 1840 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1846), p. 28.

Company failed in 1848.²³⁶ In 1845, two woolen mills had employed 50 men and 43 women.²³⁷ (In 1832, three paper mills employed 26 women and a pail factory employed four women at 33¢ per day, while one woolen factory employed ten women at 38¢.²³⁸) By the early 1860s, Dalton paper operatives made twelve to sixteen dollars a month doing piecework (and paid \$1.25 weekly for room and board).²³⁹

The need for housing for female millhands, a third of whom were foreign-born, created a satellite business of boardinghouses, usually run by respectable middle-aged women. In Dalton, boardinghouses accommodated 24 female paper mill operatives, or slightly more than half of the women who worked in the mills.²⁴⁰ Thus expanding employment opportunities for women in industry also created service sector jobs for other women. The concentration of unmarried wage-earning women in mill towns therefore meant increased business opportunities for other women.

Millinery was another one of those satellite businesses. Female mill hands bought hats and thereby supported female milliners. Female mill hands were therefore the conduit for money from male capitalists to female entrepreneurs who were proprietresses of millinery establishments as well their apprentice milliners. Nearly every town had one or more milliners, some of whom had their principle

²³⁶ Dun & Co., p. 71.

²³⁷ John G. Palfrey, Statistics of . . . Certain Branches of Industry in Massachusetts . . . (Boston: Dutton & Wentworth, 1846), p. 216.

²³⁸ Secretary of the Treasury, Documents Relative to the Manufactures in the United States . . ., vol. 1 (New York: 1832), p. 157.

²³⁹ Penny, 376.

²⁴⁰ 1860 Census, Dalton, MA.

source of trade from factory operatives, as did Jane Herrick in Great Barrington for a decade.²⁴¹ The closing of a mill whose workers patronized an establishment such as Herrick's would have ruined her business. To judge from the Dun reports, however, it was not unusual for a milliner to relocate repeatedly during her business life.

Several Berkshire County milliners pursued their business in more than one county town, moving to follow the trade, and in some cases they removed to Albany, Schenectady, New York, or even Philadelphia. Milliners, in fact, seemed to be almost as peripatetic a bunch as mill hands.

The R.G. Dun and Company credit reports provide a markedly different view of women's employment than does the census. The following chart shows the distribution of businesses pursued by women with Dun and Company credit ratings.

²⁴¹ Dun & Co., pp. 97, 113, 305.

Chart 14. Berkshire Businesswomen with Credit Ratings, 1840-1870

Milliners	72
Seamstress, dressmaker, clothier, mantuamaker, shirtmaker	5
Fancy goods	4
Restaurant, hotel, boardinghouse, tavern	4
Dry goods, dress goods, general store, grocery	4
Baker	1
Drugs	1
Drum maker	1
Farmer	1
Moulder	1
Switches and braids	1
Tobacco dealer	1

Chart 14. Berkshire Businesswomen with Credit Ratings, 1840-1870. Massachusetts Volume 3, R.G. Dun and Co. Collection, Baker Library, Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration.

The drum-maker, moulder, tobacco dealer, druggist and one hotel-keeper were widows operating businesses owned by their late husbands, and in most cases were rated as highly as their husbands had been.²⁴²

Though the Dun and Company lists report a narrow range of businesses run by women, it is important to remember that credit reports focused only on those who needed or wanted credit. Businesswomen who did most of their businesses seasonally, or who had to buy goods in advance of sales, such as milliners or mantuamakers, would have needed credit until they had set by enough savings to tide them over from one busy season to the next. In some cases, the Dun ledgers made it clear that businesswomen had accrued enough assets to do just that. The Gage sisters of Pittsfield, for instance, did millinery and dressmaking, and with their mother owned their own house. Old maids of good repute, the credit report averred, they never

²⁴² Dun & Co., pp. 173, 210, 245 & 267L.

asked for credit "and there is no reason why they should."²⁴³ Miss Laura Bailey of Lee, a milliner with nearly thirty years of credit reports, retired twice on the strength of her real estate and bank stock, resumed business and worked until she was in her early seventies. If she was worth the three to four thousand dollars reported by Dun, she could well afford to take time off from work. She impressed a series of credit investigators, one of whom wrote, that she was "the same interesting old maid -- hair false, teeth false, all false about her," but that she was a good risk.²⁴⁴

Some milliners could afford to sit out the slack times and enjoy their time off. Others, less financially secure, lasted no more than a season. If they were not canny about business or up-to-date in the styles or engaging to customers, they stood little chance of making their business a success. Mary Chapman of Pittsfield, a milliner on and off from 1855 until 1880, failed three times before a credit investigator was able to write that she "learned by misfortune to be economical."²⁴⁵ Widow Abigail Stevens was a milliner prosperous enough to advertise in the Pittsfield Sun. Because she was "careful, prudent and judicious," she accrued real estate estimated at several thousand dollars before she retired. The year before she sold out, however, the credit investigator reported that she was "too old fashioned to keep up with the times."²⁴⁶

²⁴³ Dun & Co., 1130.

²⁴⁴ Dun & Co., 133.

²⁴⁵ Dun & Co., 150 & 208.

²⁴⁶ Dun & Co., 186. The census reported her as owning no real estate, but Dun's report noted that her real estate was in Springfield. Pittsfield tax lists show only a \$500 carriage. Pittsfield 1849 Valuation List, Pittsfield Bicentennial Commission microfilm, BA.

Though the stereotype of a milliner is that of a single woman who worked only "till marriage closed her public career,"²⁴⁷ the reality lurking in Dun ledgers is sharply different. Of 96 women whose credit was rated from 1840 to 1870, the majority were married or widowed; one was divorced. Though a few single women were noted as having married and closed their businesses, the majority were either old maids supporting themselves plus a sister or a mother, widows supporting one or more children, or married women supporting profligate and/or intemperate husbands.

Outside of Boston, milliners were the best-paid of all the women's needle trades, earning an average of \$12.50 weekly, or about double the earnings of a mill operative. In Boston, where there was more competition (and where more women were employed as sewers in millinery sweatshops at lower wages) milliners earned only about \$8.00 a week. After they learned the trade and established their own businesses, milliners could earn \$15 to \$25 a week in the busy seasons of April to July and October to Christmas. They made less during the rest of the year.²⁴⁸ An apprentice was lucky to earn "a scanty pittance." City millinery establishments paid apprentices nothing for six months' training. In 1860, one milliner paid her experienced workers "from \$3 to \$15 per week, 10 hours a day, according to the amount of custom they can bring and their aptness for the business."²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ Rev. I.D. Stewart (1815), quoted by Dexter, 60.

²⁴⁸ Carroll D. Wright, The Working Girls of Boston (New York: Arno Press, 1969 reprint of Boston: 1889 edition), pp. 78-79, 96 & 100.

²⁴⁹ Penny, 318.

In order to be successful, a milliner had to have "good taste and nimble fingers; as a saleswoman, she needs to understand human nature, have activity, an honest heart, and a good disposition."²⁵⁰ Once her business was established, she also had to set money aside to support herself through the off seasons, and had to know how to use credit, as well. The rewards for a good businesswoman could be substantial. Virginia Penny's anecdotal evidence of milliners who started their own businesses and built thriving concerns worth thousands of dollars (including a woman "who commenced the millinery business five years ago with twenty dollars, and is now worth \$3,000,") and the evidence from Dun & Co. credit reports show that some women were able to rise through apprenticeship and become proprietresses of their own establishments. Others failed. But as long as every town supported at least one milliner, there were jobs open for women and girls who wanted to become self-supporting in a needle trade that paid even better than factory work.

Millinery was not the only offshoot of "women's work" that proved unusually lucrative for women with entrepreneurial spirit. An Easthampton button-factory was founded and run by Emily Graves Williston, whose husband told Caroline Dall about it to "encourage other women." The story began as a familiar one. Mrs. Williston's mother, Mrs. Graves, who did knitting as outwork, was given some buttons to cover by a shopkeeper who had no other work to offer. The work went so well that orders for buttons continued. As Samuel Williston described it, the family needed money.

Then my wife took it up. She got some of the work from her mother. That was in 1825-26, forty years ago. I had invested in merino sheep. I had ninety ewes and a large farm; but I was a young man, and found it hard to get along.

²⁵⁰ Penny, 315 & 318.

It looked as though this business would help. My wife wanted to control the work. She hired girls to help her, and took all the orders that came. J.D. Whitney and Hayden & Whitney sold all she could make. When she had had the business a year, I went to Boston, Providence, Hartford, New Haven, New York, -- in short, I went *all round*, -- with samples. I got my orders at first hand, and from that the business began. When we heard that machine-made buttons had been introduced into England, we sent over to buy the right to make them. Every man must have his small beginnings, but, when a man has such a wife as mine, he is lucky."

By 1865, Dall reported that nearly a million dollars was invested in the Easthampton button business.²⁵¹ From a start as an outworker who earned only pennies a day, Mrs. Williston grew the business until it had a capital investment of more than \$100,000 and employed more than 100 women and men.²⁵² Though Williston put his own time into the business, he credited his wife with its success -- as did others. Samuel Williston "owed the beginning of his fortunes, as everybody knows, to her wisdom and skill, to her ingenuity, her industry," said one contemporary. In their enterprises, Emily Williston was

preeminently the prompting heart and very often the guiding mind . . . not merely following but leading, so far as it was becoming to her sex If he was in advance of his age in business, in education, in politics, in social and moral and civil reform, she was always fully abreast, if not in advance of him . . .²⁵³

²⁵¹ Caroline H. Dall, The College, The Market and The Court, pp. 459-460.

²⁵² John P. Bigelow, Statistical Tables: Exhibiting the Condition and Products of Certain Branches of Industry in Massachusetts For the Year Ending April 1, 1837 (Boston: 1838), p. 76; Francis DeWitt, Statistical Information Relating to Certain Branches of Industry in Massachusetts, For the Year Ending June 1, 1855 (Boston: William White, 1856), p. 253.

²⁵³ W.S. Tyler, A Discourse Commemorative of Mrs. Emily Graves Williston, Wife of Samuel Williston . . . May 31, 1885 (Amherst: 1885), pp. 4, 8-9. N.B. Though Mrs. Williston started the business and "wanted to control" it, and acted as her husband's business partner, the town's local history did not mention her in describing Samuel Williston's "remarkable success." Payson W. Lyman, History of Easthampton (Northampton: 1866), p.

Williston encouraged other women in entrepreneurship. Like other men, he was an ally in women's moving beyond the cult of domesticity. Though financial necessity may have spurred the Willistons' entrepreneurship, they had to be willing to ignore societal proscriptions against nineteenth-century women in business. Emily Williston's position may have been protected by the fact that she worked directly with women employees, while her husband marketed the buttons. Local history accounts attribute the business entirely to Samuel Williston; only he and their minister credited Emily Williston with its inception and success. Thus one woman's accomplishment was hidden by conventional thinking of men who collected data for census abstracts and local histories. The success of that button factory, like the dairy products sold by farmeresses, indicates that the domestic ideal was not adhered to by cash-poor western Massachusetts families, regardless of how their work was recorded for posterity.

In smaller towns without manufacturing or commerce, women without assessed property were usually "employed" as widows, spinsters, or housewives, with a few housekeepers and schoolteachers mixed in. In Egremont, widow-farmer Lydia Baldwin lived with her three single daughters, one of whom was a schoolteacher. Becket's Sophia Merryfield ran the Poor House, providing care for three "idiotic pauper" siblings and one "insane pauper." In Peru, Laura Frissell's family was supported not only by her farm, but also by the efforts of her daughters Eliza, a milliner, Emela and Susan, domestics, and Seraph, a weaver. Stockbridge had an authoress, Maria Fairman (plus one woman "employed" as an invalid).

180. How many other businesswomen were overlooked when local histories were written?

How the majority of other small-town women supported themselves without taxable assets or jobs, and as heads of their own households, is unknown. With no visible means of support, many of those women may have been just eking out a living however they could. Others may have been able to live rent free by the courtesy of family, and earned enough as dairywomen, herbalists, midwives, "help," shoebinders, palm leaf braiders or doing whatever else came their way on a part-time basis, which a census enumerator might have lumped under the heading "widow" or "spinster." A combination of barter, credit, part-time work, and lodging a boarder or two might have given them enough to live on, though it may have been a precarious existence. Regardless, the majority of female heads-of-households must have been either renters or living in separate quarters through the benevolence of others.

Interdependency and Dependents

Most women who headed their own households were over 40 and many were widows. Most younger single women, on the other hand, did not head their own households; whether dependent or self-supporting, they lived with respectable families or widows. As the Buels pointed out in the case of Mary Fish's niece in 1815, a young single woman, whether she owned property or not, could not be expected to live independently of a family setting if she were to maintain any semblance of respectability.²⁵⁴ The necessity of family government of single persons both male and female was a tradition in Massachusetts that dated back to the arrival of the first

²⁵⁴ Joy Day Buel & Richard Buel, Jr., The Way of Duty: A Woman and Her Family in Revolutionary America (New York: Norton, 1984), p. 275.

Puritans, and was codified by in Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1703, when the General Court passed the law that "no single persons of either sex under the age of twenty-one years should be suffered to live at their own hand, but under some orderly family government," though "this act shall not be construed to extend to hinder any single woman of good repute from the exercise of any lawful trade or employment for a livelihood," as long as the majority of the selectmen approved of her trade.²⁵⁵

That social tradition persisted long after Puritanism had lost its monopoly on the social mores of the commonwealth. Even early mill workers were boarded with families or in boardinghouses under the governance of a respectable woman.²⁵⁶

It was common for a woman who had inherited land to remain in the household of her mother or another relative, and consequently not have shown up on the census lists as a head-of-household in spite of being on the tax lists as an owner of real estate. It is hard to measure those women's levels of autonomy or dependence, though it seems reasonable to believe that a woman with property at least had the potential of greater autonomy than a woman without property. In the early nineteenth century, a man considering marrying into a family with maiden aunts or several single sisters had to count on having some of them under his roof for part if not all of his married life. For instance, when Zelotes Bates married thirty-eight-year-old Lydia Maynard of Conway in 1828, Lydia's two single sisters, Lucy, 40, and Anna, 32, had rights to the family homestead. All evidently settled in together. Lucy and Anna

²⁵⁵ Henry H. Sprague, Women Under the Law of Massachusetts . . ., 2d ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1903), p. 7.

²⁵⁶ Dublin, Farm to Factory, p. 187.

were there when Lydia's baby was born -- and died -- in 1829. They were all still living together in 1860.²⁵⁷ In such a case, though an adult male would have ostensibly been the head-of-household, it is debatable whether or not he actually "ran the farm," so to speak. He moved into their house. Who, then, was dependent on whom? Living on his wife's family farm, moving into an established household already run by women with strong kin ties, Zelotes Bates' reality may have been something different from the assumed norm. Public records cannot tell the whole story, and dependency may be relative.

On the other hand, some public records can illuminate information derived from other public records. Some unmarried women endured different types of dependency. Tamar Pell of Sheffield was to some degree a dependent spinster. She was born in 1739 the third of John and Miriam Pell's six children. The family must have been prosperous because their oldest son, John Jr., attended Yale and was admitted to the bar in Berkshire County in 1761. When the elder Pells died is unknown (they were not on the state valuation list for Sheffield in 1771), but when Miriam wrote her will in February 1785, she did not mention either her son John Jr. or her husband. Tamar Pell and her brother Sallu (or Sallie), a Connecticut physician, witnessed Miriam's will. Miriam Pell bequeathed only a life interest to her second son, Penuel, "to have & to hold the full benefit . . . of the same during his natural Life, except the right of conveyance of anything more than the annual profits arriving therefrom." Such a stipulation was highly unusual. In most eighteenth-century families, the males controlled the land, and females received only a

²⁵⁷ History of Conway, pp. 213-214; Conway Vital Records; U.S. Census, 1850 & 1860.

small share for a dowry which became their husbands' upon marriage unless otherwise stipulated in a prenuptial contract. For a widow, a dower share or widow's thirds came with the same hindrances Miriam attached to Penuel's real estate. In the Pell family, however, things were a little bit different. There is no will on file for John Pell Sr., so the disposition of his estate is unknown. The two plots of land in Miriam's will, however, were not sufficient basis for the wealth of the Pell family. It appears that Tamar was provided for before her mother wrote her will.²⁵⁸

In 1771, Tamar, though landless, was listed as having £200 at interest and one "servant for life." In 1798, Tamar Pell was listed on the 1798 Massachusetts Direct Tax as owning eight acres of land worth \$250, but no house -- and no other Pells were living in Sheffield.²⁵⁹ She must have been living with someone other than Penuel by then, perhaps with a married sister or other relations. One of her sisters apparently married Gen. Jeremiah Hickok of Great Barrington: when Sallu wrote his will in 1805, he referred to Hickok's children as nephews and nieces. Sallu Pell also noted in passing in his will, "As I think that my sister Tamer does not and will not want any part of my estate, I have thought fit to give her nothing," -- a comment revealing how family members can settle scores from beyond the grave.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸ Sheffield Vital Records (hereafter SVR), BA; Franklin Bowditch Dexter, Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College, v. 2 (New York: Holt, 1896), pp. 481-482; Massachusetts Tax Valuation List of 1771, Bettye Hobbs Pruitt, ed., (Boston: 1978), p. 472; BCP #1338 (Miriam Pell).

²⁵⁹ Mass. 1798 Direct Tax, Sheffield, schedule C.

²⁶⁰ BCP #2557 (Sallu Pell).

After Sallu's death the public record is silent on the Pell family until June 1819 when Daniel Williams of Lenox (husband of Tamar's niece Miriam (Hickok) Williams and acting for her and Laura Hickok, another niece) petitioned the court to have the eighty-year-old Tamar judged non compos mentis. Williams' petition stated that Tamar Pell was a "non compos or distracted person and incapable of taking care of herself or of her estate." Judge William Walker ordered Tamar to appear at Probate Court to be questioned concerning the allegations, and warned, "Hereof fail not at your peril." On July 6, 1819 the selectmen concurred with Williams. Tamar was judged insane. Judge Walker appointed as guardian Royce Leonard, "gentleman," the husband of Tamar Pell's niece, Betsey (Hickok) Leonard.

As a property owner, Tamar Pell fit none of the categories heretofore described. She was not a widow. She was not one of several single sisters with a pact to support each other. The rent from her acreage may have provided a small income, but probably did not fully support her because her personal property included neither livestock or foodstuffs. In addition to the acreage, she owned different fractions of house, barn, kitchen cellar, and barnyard, ranging from a quarter to a sixth -- so, like many elderly women in early America, Tamar Pell probably lived with a family member. Her personal property included the usual household items needed for housekeeping plus numerous luxury items: gold and silver rings, gold beads, common jewelry and "elegant jewels" that were probably too expensive for the rent on her real estate to have purchased.²⁶¹ Her land may have been a bequest from her father or settled on her by her mother; her jewelry may have been a gift

²⁶¹ BCP #3752 & #4405 (Tamar Pell).

from her parents, grandparents, or even a suitor. She might have pursued a lucrative occupation in her younger days. It is impossible to say with any certainty where she got what. When she died in 1825, her valuables were still intact, so she had not needed to sell assets to support herself.

Whether Tamar Pell was suffering from insanity, senility, or just a bad attitude when confronted with nieces backed up by powerful nephews-in-law, we will probably never know. But she was a woman who showed up on tax lists as an owner of property even though she was a dependent in someone else's household.

Though Tamar Pell followed one pattern of the stereotype of nineteenth-century women dependent on relatives in old age, there was another way for women who had inherited property and had the gumption and ability to make it work for them to make a living. Neither their landownership nor their household demographics quite fit the patterns heretofore described.

Farm Owners

In Berkshire County there was a subset of women landowners whose households contained more than the "normal" number of men for households headed by women: they were farmers. This subset had a ratio of 52 adult males to 100 females, whereas the overall ratio for women-headed households was 40 males to 100 females. Few women farmers lived alone. Nearly every woman in this group had an unmarried son or sons, a son-in-law, or hired laborers living under their roof.²⁶²

²⁶² Of 34 women farmers in 1850, only one lived with younger people who could be positively identified as a son and daughter-in-law. In 1860, of 58 women farmers, only two lived with daughters-in-law (one married, one widowed). Most women farmers whose

Only four -- Sophia Bill of Washington, Sarah Ingalls and Mary Ann Williams of Lenox, and Catherine Peirson of Richmond had all-female households in 1850 (and Peirson was sufficiently wealthy that she may have employed males living in separate households on her own property). A notable difference of this subset is that a number of their households included extended family -- sometimes as many as four generations under one roof. In 1850, Susanna Cooper of Stockbridge was the head of a household apparently including her three daughters, one son, her mother-in-law, her brother, his wife and their two toddlers, and an Irish lad of 14. There were few nuclear families (for this purpose defined as a woman living with her children) among these women's farm households. Women living with their minor children usually had a single or widowed sister, mother or mother-in-law living with them, and occasionally a brother, possibly including the brother's family, as well.²⁶³

Few women showed up as farmers on the 1850 census agricultural schedules for Berkshire County: 34 could be confirmed through both agricultural and population schedules. Some towns had none. Ten towns had only one or two; five had three or

household composition was identifiable (8 in 1850 and 21 in 1860) lived with unmarried sons and daughters -- a pattern typical of farm families whether headed by males or females. As males reached maturity and married, they settled on farms of their own.

Though the sample is small, it is significant that Berkshire County farm sons evidently did not live with their mothers after marriage, but that daughters and sons-in-law did. Perhaps the lines of authority were clearer (and the circumstances easier) between a daughter and the husband she brought to live on her mother's farm than between a married son who wanted to head his own household and his mother who already did head that household.

²⁶³ Determined from 1850 Census, 1850 Census Agricultural Schedules, towns' published vital records, local histories and the Berkshire Athenaeum's Berkshire Collection of typescript vital records and cemetery inscriptions.

four. Stockbridge had more than eight. Berkshire County towns followed the same general pattern in 1860, when 58 farms were owned by women.²⁶⁴

Most of the women who ran their own farms were widows. Of 34 women farmers (or, as one census enumerator called them, farmeresses) in 1850, twelve were identifiable as widows, and several others were probably widows. Four farms were owned by single women: Catherine Peirson of Richmond, Polly and Harriet Young of West Stockbridge, Maria Fairman of Stockbridge, and Sarah Goodspeed of Lee.

In 1850 their farms ranged in size from thirteen to 700 acres worth \$700 to \$7000, with an average size of 130 acres and an average value of \$2677. (By contrast, a sample of 70 Berkshire County men's farms in 1850 had an average value of \$3258 and an average size of 156 acres.) The increasing scarcity of land and its consequent expense show in average farm size and value in 1860. Women's farms averaged 108 acres worth an average of \$3213.²⁶⁵ Overall, Berkshire County farms averaged 145 acres worth \$3274.²⁶⁶ Even so, there was a substantial increase in the

²⁶⁴ Stockbridge had 12 farmeresses in 1860 -- double the next closest towns, Egremont (6) and West Stockbridge (5). Stockbridge has shown an overrepresentation of women with better the average prospects for autonomy another way: it had more than the normal number of women heads of households. In addition, Stockbridge is unusual in that many of its nineteenth-century gravestones list the birth names of married women, as recorded in "Vital Statistics of Stockbridge," Mrs. Herbert E. Stockwell, comp. (1935), typescript at BA.

²⁶⁵ In 1860, 78 men's farms averaged 151 acres worth \$2867, and I cannot account for why there was no increase in the value of men's farms equivalent in the increase of the value of women's farms. Perhaps by some anomaly in the way census enumerators counted the wealthiest farmers, I missed them entirely in my random sample. On the other hand, perhaps women were inheriting homesteads that had been kept relatively intact because their brothers had already moved to the West. But if men's farms were still larger than women's, why weren't they worth more?

²⁶⁶ Secretary of the Board of Agriculture, Ninth Annual Report . . . (Boston: 1862), p. 240.

number of farmeresses in this decade: from 34 to 58 women farm owners in Berkshire County.²⁶⁷ Few (4, or 12%) of the women who were enumerated as farmers in 1850 persisted as farmers to 1860. The average age of the 1850 farmeresses was 58; the average age of the persisters was 43. Because of their advanced age, many of the older nonpersisting 1850 farmeresses may have either relinquished control of their farms to their children or died before 1860.²⁶⁸ In 1860, 28 of the 58 (48%) women farmers had minor children living with them, while 16 appeared to be spinster sisters or middle-aged daughters living with their mothers. Seven appeared to be mothers living with grown children. The remaining seven weren't readily identifiable. It may be that women ran farms most commonly when there was no male child old enough to take ownership, in which case many of those nonpersisting women farmers may have acted as stewards for their deceased husbands' property until the children were of age, at which time it would have been divided among them.

A check of probate records for 25 farmeresses whose husbands were identifiable and whose husbands left wills showed that 22 had been left only a life estate in the farms they ran; two received outright ownership, and one received an amount estimated to be less than dower. In addition, a number of widows who were farmers received a dower share of their husbands' farms when those intestates' probate was administered. In general, women farmers were unlikely to have full control over their real estate. There was an increasing tendency for men to bequeath

²⁶⁷ 1850 & 1860 Census Agricultural and Population Schedules, Berkshire County, Mass.

²⁶⁸ I have not surveyed women farmers to see how many persisted as nonfarmers to 1860.

a life interest in the full estate, not just a dower third -- additional insurance, in the form of property, that their wives would be comfortable in hard times. It may also have been evidence that men wanted their farms preserved intact, to prevent subdividing to the point where subsistence needs could not be met.

There were certain aspects of farming that were generally understood to be the province of women. Judges of butter and cheese at Berkshire County's fortieth annual Farmer's Festival waxed eloquent on the subject in 1850:

Your committee rejoice to be able to say that nature has furnished to no place facilities for producing these articles, in their most delicious flavor, superior to those in our own Berkshire. No sweeter feed exists, than that which covers her hills and lines her valleys, and no purer springs than gush from her rocks -- still more would they rejoice that the skill and intelligence of the daughters of Berkshire in turning those advantages to account are inferior to those of none in the world. And so we hope it ever may be. We are, we trust, as much the friends of education . . . as any men, but not of that which raises one in her own estimation above her true sphere -- not of that which leads one to look with contempt upon that in which she ought to be proud to excel. We care not how much learning or accomplishment a young lady may have, the more the better; but if we were to have but one, we would rather she know how to work buttermilk out of butter than work out . . . Algebra, and how to turn milk into cheese than Greek into English.²⁶⁹

The dairy judges -- all male -- were quite clear about what they considered to be fitting accomplishments for the daughters of Berkshire County. Furthermore, in spite of the cult of domesticity, these men expected "young ladies" to do manual labor including milking cows and hauling heavy pails of milk, that seems antithetical to the "true sphere" of a "young lady." The dairy judges also assumed --even though most farms were owned by men -- that women would be the ones working the butter and

²⁶⁹ "The Farmers' Festival," Pittsfield Sun, October 10, 1850, p. 2.

pressing the cheese.²⁷⁰ Even before dairying was commercialized, it was a lucrative business for dairywomen. "The sale of a surplus of several hundred pounds a year," Joan Jensen points out, " . . . was often enough to buy most of the commodities the family needed for the household." Using the average consumption of 25 pounds of butter per person per year for farm families, the 27 farmeresses who produced more butter than they needed had a surplus of 6,915 pounds of butter, or an average surplus of 256 pounds per farm, which would have provided them with either ready cash or credit.²⁷¹ A dairywoman receiving fourteen cents a pound for her surplus butter would earn an average of \$35.84 for her 256-pound surplus -- or enough to pay the annual taxes on the farm, with some left over.

Sarah Goodspeed of Lee surely produced butter for the market: her household of three could not possibly have consumed the 1600 pounds of butter they made from their eight cows' milk in 1860. The \$200+ that their butter was worth was well above the per capita income in the northern United States in 1860. Mary Bowen of Peru evidently joined the trend toward commercial dairying: her cows yielded enough milk to make 8000 pounds of cheese in 1860. (She had more cows and made more cheese than any farms in the men's sample for 1860.) If her household of six each consumed an average of 5.6 pounds of cheese yearly, as estimated by Fred Bateman,

²⁷⁰ Though dairying may have involved both men and women, as was the case in New York's Nanticoke Valley studied by Nancy Grey Osterud, the Berkshires' public perception was that though dairymen may have owned most of the cows, dairywomen were the ones who produced butter and cheese. Osterud, Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp.151-156.

²⁷¹ Joan Jensen, Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 83 & 85; 1850 Census Agricultural Schedules, Berkshire County.

and she sold the surplus cheese at eight cents a pound, she would have had an income of \$637 from her surplus cheese in 1860, plus an additional \$53 from her surplus butter -- and \$690 was a substantial income for any family, but especially for a rural farmer-widow. Bowen had three adolescent sons, a hired man, and a nineteen-year-old daughter in her household -- all old enough to be productive workers.²⁷²

In dairying, farmeresses got more out of their farms than did farmers in 1850. Comparing women's farms' production of dairy products to that of men's shows that women's production was more efficient than men's. The chart below shows the production values of men's and women's cows in 1850, as measured by pounds of butter per cow.

Chart 15. Butter Production: Men's and Women's Farms, 1850

	<u>Farmeresses</u>	<u>Farmers</u>
Avg. # Cows	3.7	5.3
Butter, lbs.	339 (91.6 #/cow)	359 (67.7 #/cow)

Chart 15. Butter Production: Men's and Women's Farms, 1850. Sample from 1850 Agricultural Schedules, Berkshire County, Massachusetts: 29 women and 44 men whose farms reported butter production.

In 1860, women farmers' butter production dropped to 293 pounds in spite of the fact that their herds had increased to an average of 4.1 cows, while men's butter production had edged ahead to 525 pounds, a rate of production per cow slightly

²⁷² Fred Bateman, "The 'Marketable Surplus' in Northern Dairy Farming: New Evidence by Size of Farm in 1860," *Agricultural History* v. 52 #3 (July 1978), pp. 357-358. Berkshire County prices may have run lower than the averages quoted by Bateman. In 1846-1847, storekeeper J.B. Hosmer of Curtisville (Stockbridge) sold butter for 18¢ per pound and cheese for 7¢. In one entry, Hosmer appears to have paid 10¢ a pound for 60 pounds of butter, or took it on account. If that was the price the buttermaker received, it would have been much lower than Bateman's estimate. J.B. Hosmer, Day Book #1, Curtisville: 1846-1847 (BA).

better than women's. Though the samples are small, farmers' cheese production appears to have been consistently higher than farmeresses', so farmers may have converted more of their cows' milk to cheese than to butter. According to one account, dairymaids could earn their keep by working as cheesemakers.

I talked with an old gentleman who had been in the cheese business nearly all his life. He said a farmer's wife is the best help in cheese making. In making cheese, seven eighths of the work is done by women. A man usually places the cheese in the press, and removes it when it is dried sufficiently. Women are paid from \$1.75 to \$2 a week and their board. Neatness, good health, judgment, and common education are desirable for a cheese maker. An individual must be able to reckon the pounds, weigh the salt, and regulate the temperature of the milk and curd by the thermometer. The first advice given by a lady who taught to make cheese was, "Keep your vessels clean." The number of hours given by a girl to her work depends on the contract made -- generally eight hours -- sometimes ten. Some farmers hire girls who devote themselves exclusively to cheese making during the season for it [spring through fall].²⁷³

For a hired dairymaid who might not find other work in a rural area other than domestic service or needlework, cheesemaking was a reasonable alternative, requiring fewer hours of work for equivalent pay.

Some have the afternoon [off] after the cheese is put in the press, and the jars, &c., are cleaned, until time to milk in the evening. The morning milking is usually done before breakfast, and the cheese made after breakfast. It requires until about two o'clock to get through. When cheese is put in a press, nothing further is necessary until it is ready to be removed. It remains in the press twenty-four hours. Most farmers have their cheese made on Sunday morning as on other days.²⁷⁴

For a woman with other domestic responsibilities that could be fitted around cheesemaking, it was one source of cash or credit for which she could use raw

²⁷³ Penny, p. 152.

²⁷⁴ Penny, 152-153.

materials already available on most farms. One Yankee girl, using the milk of sixty cows and working for only eight months of the year, sold her cheese to a German cheesemonger for \$80 in 1860.²⁷⁵ She made \$2.00 to \$2.50 a week, working fewer hours than the average employed needleworker. The quantities -- thousands of pounds -- of dairy products produced by some farms indicate that they were providing butter and cheese for the market, possibly shipping to Albany for transshipment by rail or water to seaboard cities.

Women farmers whose children were grown and gone had several options for cash crops. They devoted their resources of time and labor to products that had proved the most profitable and which suited their farms' terrain and resources. A male farmer, on the other hand, could do heavy field work and often had a son or son-in-law, as well -- which may explain why men's farms produced more corn, potatoes, and hay -- all of which required heavy labor -- than did women's farms.²⁷⁶ Dairying was a reasonable alternative for women farmers as well as for farmwives where rocky, sandy New England soil provided pasturage more easily than tillage. Nearly every farmeress produced butter; a third of them made cheese. In 1830, retired Cheshire minister John Leland wrote in his diary, "My wife is 77 years old,

²⁷⁵ Penny, 153.

²⁷⁶ The 33 women's farms produced an average of 57 bushels of corn, 87 bushels of potatoes, and 26 tons of hay, compared with 39 men's farms' average of 84 bushels of corn, 123 bushels of potatoes, and 30 tons of hay.

and has this season done the housework, and from six cows has made 1800 pounds of cheese and 250 pounds of butter."²⁷⁷

Many women farmers had specialties in addition to dairy products. Sarah Brown Foster kept bees for beeswax and honey. Lydia Fife of Florida and Lillis Knight of Adams each made 500 pounds of maple sugar in 1850; they must have had substantial stands of maple trees on their property. Knight also pressed 3200 pounds of cheese in 1850 -- substantial labor for a woman of 88, considering that for every pound of cheese produced, ten or twelve pounds of milk had to be carried and processed -- but her household included her daughter and two Irish women so she probably did not have to shoulder the entire load herself.²⁷⁸ Farmeresses at higher elevations (with shorter growing seasons for field crops) kept large flocks of sheep. Lucy Geer of Peru had a flock of 45 that produced 150 pounds of wool. Sophia Bill of Washington had 67 sheep whose shearing yielded 200 pounds of wool, and Hannah White of Hancock had 216 sheep whose fleeces weighed 600 pounds.

Catherine Peirson of Richmond kept 114 sheep yielding 351 pounds of wool. Peirson, however, was wealthy enough to hire a farm manager to maintain the operation.²⁷⁹ One of three daughters of Nathan Peirson of Richmond, Catherine had inherited an undivided third of most of his property, along with instructions to

²⁷⁷ C.A. Browne, "Elder John Leland and the Mammoth Cheshire Cheese," Agricultural History 18 (October 1944), p. 148. N.B. The retired minister's wife was not herself retired.

²⁷⁸ 1850 Census, Population and Agriculture Schedules, Berkshire County, MA.

²⁷⁹ Her farm manager later married her niece and inherited the homestead. 1850 Census Agricultural Schedules, Berkshire County; Katharine Annin, Richmond, Massachusetts . . . 1765-1965 (Richmond Civic Association: 1964), p. 134.

provide for my said son Sanford [of New Berlin, NY] during his life, comfortable board and clothing, so far as he shall not be able to provide them for himself, and from time to time in equal proportion to furnish my said son David what may be necessary to preserve him from actual suffering and want.²⁸⁰

Few nineteenth-century fathers instructed daughters to provide for their brothers.

Peirson recognized his daughter's superior abilities in business. After taking ownership of her share of the Peirson acreage, tavern and tanyard (connected to the homestead across the road by an underground tunnel) she parleyed her third (worth about \$17,000 in 1826) into an estate of more than \$450,000 at her death in 1888.²⁸¹ Her obituary, titled "A Thrifty Woman," noted that she "was a woman of keen business faculties," and that though she was charitable, "still she was prudent and her very modest wants only consumed a fraction of her income."²⁸²

Born in 1795, Catherine Peirson lived nearly to the twentieth century. A wealthy woman, she, like other farmers of her generation, raised sheep -- a flock of more than 200 in 1888. It is difficult to reconcile the images of the expensively dressed woman of substance with the sheep-farmer, or the canny investor with the single woman who preserved a bracelet with the words "Remember me," until her death -- but it is important to remember both when she was born and when she died. She was born in the eighteenth century, and died nearly in the twentieth century.

²⁸⁰ BCP #4465 (Nathan Peirson).

²⁸¹ BCP #16197 (Catharine Peirson). Picture of Peirson Place, Richmond, from History of Berkshire County, vol. 2 (New York: J.B. Beers, 1885), p. 495.

²⁸² "A Thrifty Woman," Pittsfield Sun, Dec. 13, 1888, p.1. It was quite unusual for a woman to merit a front-page obituary.

Though her inheritance came from the eighteenth century, her investments depended on an expanding market economy. Even so, like many single women of the nineteenth century, she made substantial bequests to her Congregational Church and four missionary societies, as well as to friends and relatives. And like other single Berkshire County women, when she left legacies to married women, the bequests were "to be their own, without control of the husband."²⁸³

Beyond the Bonds of Womanhood: Susan Dunham

Some women who did not bequeath property or head their own households were nonetheless remarkably independent. Public records do not tell the story of every person. Women who lived unconventional lives, whether they owned property or not, can be only a shadowy presence in history. Susan Dunham was a Berkshire County woman well known because of her public misfortune. Anecdotal evidence preserves details omitted from the public record. Dunham was a landowner without a permanent home, and her lifestyle made her memorable.

Susannah or Susan Dunham was born in 1767 on Martha's Vineyard, the child of Cornelius and Tabitha (Hancock) Dunham. Her family relocated to the Berkshires in her youth and Susan Dunham reportedly grew into a bright and lovely young woman. She taught school in Lenox before her life took a tragic turn.²⁸⁴ As one

²⁸³ BCP #16197 (Catharine Peirson); "A Thrifty Woman," Pittsfield Sun, Dec. 13, 1888, p.1; 1850 Census, Richmond, MA; Terry Hallock, Early Houses of Richmond, Massachusetts ([Pittsfield, MA]: Hallocraft, 1959), n.p.

²⁸⁴ "Sketch of 'Crazy Sue,'" The Berkshire Hills v. 1, #2, (Pittsfield, MA: October 1, 1900), p.1; Ibid., (December, 1900) (henceforth cited as "Sketch"); Dunham Genealogy, pp. 120-121.

biographer wrote, "her beauty was her bane; she loved, was deceived, betrayed and deserted."²⁸⁵ Her unnamed betrayer was described as a socially prominent citizen of Pittsfield, a man whose reputation was sullied by his dishonorable conduct toward her. A relative blamed politics for her disappointment in love.

In an era of fiercely partisan politics, Susan Dunham accepted the proposal of "an estimable young man," but his father refused to allow their marriage because her father was a political opponent. Apparently unwilling to defy his father or jeopardize his inheritance, the young man gave her up. Soon afterward, she attended a church camp meeting, where the emotional frenzy added to her grief and disappointment unbalanced her mind. In later years, when asked what had made her crazy, she would answer, "Oh, a little politics and a little religion."²⁸⁶ As Nancy Grey Osterud points out, "Some women remained single, then, because of failures in their relationships with men."²⁸⁷ These events must have occurred before 1800, because Miss Hart Lester (later Mrs. Lemuel Pomeroy) recalled that she had first seen "Crazy Sue" in a Windsor graveyard in 1798 or 1799, looking wild and haggard.²⁸⁸

For 50 years, Susan Dunham made a name for herself in Berkshire County as "Crazy Sue," a woman who, though ostensibly under guardianship and boarding with relatives, roamed the countryside. In 1811, she was declared "non compos" or

²⁸⁵ Unattributed clipping in "Berkshire Scrapbook," compiled by Harlan H. Ballard (copy in Susan Dunham file at Berkshire Athenaeum), henceforth cited as Scrapbook.

²⁸⁶ "Sketch."

²⁸⁷ Osterud, 125.

²⁸⁸ "Sketch."

"lunatick;" the court assigned guardianship to her father. At his death in 1814, her share of his estate including one undivided eighth of his farm, along with a legacy left by her brother, was assigned to another guardian. He rented out her real estate, invested her legacy, paid relatives to board and clothe her.²⁸⁹

During Susan Dunham's wandering years, she went from the home of one prominent citizen to another, usually arriving just in time for supper, which she ate sitting on the floor. Contemporary accounts indicate that she was always offered food and a bed notwithstanding her propensity for building bonfires -- sometimes not in the fireplace, but on the floor -- during the night. She never stayed long, and sometimes slept in graveyards when not sheltered indoors. Lanesborough dressmaker Eunice Smith and other charitable women gave Sue clothing when hers grew ragged. On occasion she stole food or clothing, sometimes by suggesting a prayer, then quietly appropriating the goods while the others' eyes were closed.²⁹⁰ Once it appeared she had drowned in the river when her clothes were found on the ground near a barrel that had held soft soap for Jonathan Allen's fulling mill. After a search, she was found soaking herself in the barrel, up to her neck in soapy rainwater.²⁹¹

Fanny Appleton (later Longfellow), on a visit to the Golds (her mother's family) in Pittsfield, described her first encounter with "Crazy Sue" in July 1835.

After dinner "Crazy Sue" made us a visit to my delight, for I was crazy to see her. She was not so frantically demented as I expected, but rambled on, a thousand thoughts pushing away others half formed, with now and then an

²⁸⁹ BCP #2845 (Susanna Dunham) & #3209 (Cornelius Dunham).

²⁹⁰ "Sketch."

²⁹¹ Scrapbook.

amazingly shrewd "hit" at matters and things. Religion is her main topic, which she seems to view more rationally than many sounder heads. She was in tolerably fanciful garb with roses stuck through a hole in her antique bonnet, one whole shoe, and another strapped round her foot all manner of ways, which she called her "cloven foot." She sung us an old ballad, of a youth crazed for love, pretty much her own story as I supposed, though she gives a much more rational and less romantic cause for her madness, namely that it runs in the family. She must have been beautiful once, for weatherbeaten as she is, she is very fine looking, and her straight nose and black bright eyes bear evidence of better days. Mother gave her a dollar to buy a pair of shoes and she strode off for them at a most majestic pace.²⁹²

Appleton commended Sue's stamina and active outdoor life, noting that she "strides about constantly all over the country though she is over sixty." She noted that Dunham thought "a great deal of her immortalization by Miss [Catherine] Sedgwick as 'Crazy Bet'" in A New England Tale, said to be an accurate portrayal.²⁹³



Illustration 6. Susan Dunham.

Anecdotes abound about Crazy Sue.

Her derangement did not harm her sense of humor. The target of her jokes was usually an authority figure. On one occasion, attorney (later governor) George Briggs and Dr. William Tyler were riding home together from South Adams, and, passing through Cheshire, saw Sue fishing

²⁹² Mrs. Longfellow: Selected Letters and Journals of Fanny Appleton Longfellow (1817-1861), Edward Wagenknecht, ed. (New York: 1956), p. 17.

²⁹³ Longfellow, 18; Scrapbook. Portrait of Susan Dunham by George Williams (photo courtesy of Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, MA).

in a brook. They stopped, and Briggs asked, "Sue, what are you doing?" "Fishing." "What are you trying to catch?" "The devil." When he pressed his interrogation to ask what she was using for bait, she replied, "Lawyers and doctors," effectively ending the conversation.²⁹⁴

On one chilly day, Sue visited the warm kitchen of the pastor of Pittsfield's First Congregational Church, Dr. Humphrey. (This was when Massachusetts citizens were taxed to support each town's Congregational Church.) When the parson rather uncharitably asked Sue why she did not go to the poor house, she replied, "I am at the poor house -- ain't you supported by the town?"²⁹⁵

Visiting the home of a prosperous farmer, Sue found they had all left to harvest their crop, leaving the house unwatched. She slipped inside, gathered up all their silver spoons, hid them, and left unnoticed. The family supposed the spoons had been stolen. Weeks later, Sue called on them again and remarked on their using pewter instead of the good silver. Just before she left, she told them that if they read their Bible as often as they should, they would have found their spoons long since. Their silver was tucked in their Bible.²⁹⁶

Well-dressed churchwomen were a target. Sue would lean over the pew to inspect a new garment worn by the hapless churchgoer, run her hands over it, ask in a loud whisper where it was purchased and what it cost, pronounce it "Babylonish" [as in the whore of Babylon] and admonish the mortified woman that no one would

²⁹⁴ "Sketch."

²⁹⁵ "Sketch."

²⁹⁶ "Sketch."

think more of her for wearing it, except perhaps Satan. "So keen was her discernment," the author wrote, "that a new bonnet, shawl or dress hardly ever failed to escape her notice in all the towns in which she attended church ... and many times she almost drove her sane, well-attired sisters wild with shame and chagrin."²⁹⁷

Thus went "Crazy Sue." Just before her death, Susan Dunham's reason came back. She claimed to have no memory of her years of wandering, her high spells, when she was antic and humorous, or her low spells, when she was quiet and repented deeds done during her high spells. Sue could only remember her childhood and wonder what had happened between her youth and wrinkled old age.²⁹⁸

Susan Dunham's death record states that she died of old age. There is no mention of insanity. One account referred to her as the "'Madge Wildfire' of these valleys."²⁹⁹ If rumors are true, Susan Dunham's lover died in wealth, surrounded by luxury, his honor only slightly tarnished.³⁰⁰

Susan Dunham's youth included a reasonable expectation of a conventional good marriage and quiet domesticity. Life brought her something else. Though she owned real estate and ostensibly boarded with kin, she had no fixed home -- and the domestic ideal was based on the premise of hearth and home for women. She was a

²⁹⁷ "Sketch."

²⁹⁸ "Sketch."

²⁹⁹ Septuagenarian Dinner: Report of the Speeches, Poem and Other Proceedings (Albany: 1870), p. 37. (BA) The 1850 census entry for Susan Dunham in Windsor made no record of insanity. In Sir Walter Scott's The Heart of Midlothian, Madge Wildfire was a woman crazed by the betrayal of her lover. Masterplots: Cyclopedia of Literary Characters, v. 1, Frank N. Magill, ed. (New York: 1963), pp. 450-451.

³⁰⁰ Scrapbook.

landowner without being a householder. After her disappointment in love, she was a woman with no occupation -- beggary and theft were not considered suitable occupations for a woman from a good family. Disappointed by a man, she became the very antithesis of nineteenth-century middle-class femininity: ragged, dirty, irrational, dishonest, irreverent, disrespectful of male authority, publicly outspoken, and utterly lacking the self-control society expected of women from respectable families. Rather than retiring to the quiet life of an educated spinster helping out in a domestic setting, as did the Arms sisters or Mary Hawks, Susan Dunham exemplified the betrayed woman whose misfortune was public knowledge. For fifty years she served as a sharp reminder to other women to be careful in their choice of a prospective spouse.

One of the ironies of the life of Susan Dunham is that we know so much more about her than we know of her more respectable sisters. More is known about her than about most single women who lived relatively public lives through their charity or business interests or professions. Her unconventionality, shocking though it may have been at the time, made her memorable. As a woman both dependent and independent, she flouted convention and fit none of the stereotypes for nineteenth-century women. Dunham thus serves as a reminder that those stereotypes are largely based on what is assumed to be true for the majority of women -- a false assumption for many women whose stories are not as well known as Dunham's.

CHAPTER 7

BERKSHIRE COUNTY WOMEN'S WILLS

Though demographic studies are helpful for background, the researcher needs to explore other sources to determine the intentions of those who lived more than a century ago. Diaries and letters are two of those sources, and evidence from women's writings is scattered throughout this study as it is throughout the historical record. Wills are another source whereby the intentions of the long-dead can be determined, and in some respects, as others have pointed out, their actions speak louder than words.³⁰¹ Opinions written in letters and diaries may be altered to suit the audience; wills, on the other hand, in most cases are written to suit the wishes of the author, and no one else.

More than 340 Berkshire County women wrote wills to dispose of their property from 1780 to 1860. They ranged from poor widows such as Eliza M. Hubbard, whose total estate consisted of a rocking chair, a bureau and two chair frames worth \$7.00, to the wealthiest of widows such as Lucy Campbell, with a total estate worth more than \$45,000.³⁰² The women who wrote the wills were a mixed group in other ways besides their wealth or lack thereof: 87 were widows, 107 were probably widows, 14 were married at the time they wrote their wills, and 71 were

³⁰¹ Ronald Hoffman & Peter J. Albert, eds., Women in the Age of the American Revolution (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), pp. 46, 52.

³⁰² BCP #6974 & #7767.

single. The marital status of the remainder could not be reasonably deduced from probate records.

The distribution of women's wills by decade parallels the increase in women as heads-of-households: a steady increase from 1800 to 1860. As can be seen in the following chart, men's testation rates increased from 1780 to 1860, but women's rates increased even faster.

Chart 16. Berkshire County Wills, 1780-1860³⁰³

	<u>Wills</u>		<u>Population</u>	<u>♀ Wills/Pop</u>	<u>♂ Wills/Pop</u>
1780-99	10♀		30,213	.033%	not read
1800s	15♀ 168♂		33,670	.045%	.498%
1810s	18♀ 256♂		35,787	.05%	.757%
1820s	24♀ 259♂		35,570	.068%	.728%
1830s	59♀ 325♂		37,706	.156%	.861%
1840s	75♀ 352♂		41,745	.18%	.843%
1850s	128♀ 477♂		48,258	.265%	.988%

Chart 16. Berkshire County Wills, 1780-1860. From probate files.

Though women's testation rates were lower, women's as well as men's increased from 1780 through the 1850s. Once again a big increase can be seen in the 1830s --

³⁰³ Chickering, 28; DeBow, 254. For Dukes County, Massachusetts, 1821-1850, Richard Chused found his sample of 35 females' wills to be a steady .3% of the population. Lacking countywide mortality figures, this "crude estimate" has to serve to show the testation rate. For the same three decades, the male testation rate ranged from .9% to 1.3%, so in Dukes County, if the gender ratio were about even, three to four times as many men wrote wills as did women. Richard Chused, "Married Women's Property Law: 1800-1850," Georgetown Law Journal 71, #5 (June 1983), pp. 1374-1375.

possibly an attempt to provide economic security in an increasingly uncertain economy. The greatest increase for women was thus well before the passage of the Married Women's Property Act in 1855, indicating that Berkshire County's population had liberalized its attitude toward women's landownership well before the commonwealth legislated the changes. Berkshire County women were thus taking control of the disposal of their assets at higher rates decade by decade in the nineteenth century. As Richard Chused pointed out, perhaps women "were making a subtle statement of goals by attempting to control the disposition of their assets" at the same time that "constraints on the ability of women to hold property were being released so that the opportunities for taking dispositional control" were available to more women.³⁰⁴

Testators' Real Estate Ownership

Though female testators owned widely varying amounts of property both real and personal, they tended in the earliest years to own just personal property. Though they might have been on the tax lists as owners of real estate, most were paying taxes on their dower share, and owned outright only their personal property, which they bequeathed with loving and endless detail.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁴ Chused, 1375-1376.

³⁰⁵ Because widows received only a dower interest in their husbands' estates, they did not have the right to will that real estate because its distribution was allocated by their husbands' wills. Because they did not own that property outright, it was not listed in their probate inventories. Thus many widows may have had access to much greater wealth (and consequently had a better standard of living) than indicated by the property showing on their inventories. Widows' true prosperity therefore cannot be fully measured without cross-
(continued...)

The following chart shows that from one-third to one-half of the women who wrote wills also owned real estate:

**Chart 17. Property Ownership by Female Testators,³⁰⁶
1780-1860**

	All	Real Estate
1780-1799	10	3 (30%)
1800-1809	15	4 (27%)
1810-1819	18	8 (44%)
1820-1829	24	7 (29%)
1830-1839	59	31 (53%)
1840-1849	75	34 (45%)
1850-1859	128	62 (48%)

Chart 17. Property Ownership by Female Testators, 1780-1860.
From Berkshire County probate files.

By this measure also it is clear that women's real estate ownership increased well before the passage of the first Married Women's Property Acts in Massachusetts. In the 1850s when those acts were consolidated into law, however, the number of women landowners nearly doubled -- during a decade when the population was

³⁰⁵(...continued)

referencing their wills with their husbands' probate records. Alice Hanson Jones, "The Wealth of Women, 1774," Strategic Factors in Nineteenth Century America Economic History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 254. My thanks to Bruce Laurie for pointing out this article.

³⁰⁶ From inventories and mention of real estate in 329 wills. Personal estate was determined from inventories, or, lacking an inventory, by inference where estate was willed without any mention of real estate.

growing at a much lower rate than it had earlier in the century. Favorable legislation apparently encouraged a trend that had begun about twenty years earlier. By 1860, an increasing number of Berkshire County women had acquired real estate in varying amounts, thereby securing varying amounts of independence and/or autonomy.

It was not just the wives and daughters of the wealthy who owned land. There were several women in the lowest ownership bracket with less than \$100 worth of real estate. One woman owned only \$30 in land. As pointed out earlier, men's landownership also clustered at the lower levels. The following chart shows the variety of landownership levels of women testators in the most recent three decades studied, compared with ownership levels of men and women taxpayers. Percentages are given for women testators for the sake of comparison with taxpayers.

Chart 18. Landownership Levels by Female Testators, 1830-1860
Compared with Taxpayers

Real Estate	Female Testators				Taxpayers, 1850	
	1830s	1840s	1850s	%	♀	♂
<\$500	13	7	8	25%	48%	30%
\$500-999	2	7	7	22%	18%	21%
\$1000s	4	7	6	19%	23%	23%
\$2000s	2	3	5	16%	6%	11%
\$3000-4999	1	2	4	13%	4%	9%
\$5000-9999	0	0	1	3%	.6%	5%
\$10000-19999	0	0	1	3%	0	1%
\$20,000+	0	0	0	0	0	.1%
Totals	22	26	32			

Chart 18. Landownership Levels by Female Testators, 1830-1860. Based on 150 female and 2362 male taxpayers in Pittsfield, Lanesborough, Dalton, Sheffield, Goshen, Granby, Blandford, Ashfield & Deerfield.

Nearly half of women taxpayers owned under \$500 real estate in 1850, a logical place for women with widows' thirds, because most men owned under \$2000 in real estate and many widows would have had a third of that. Female testators (which excluded some widows), however, owned nearly as much land as male taxpayers, fitting the pattern of having full control of land instead of only a life estate in it. This disparity in landownership patterns is a reminder of the difficulties involved in using only one sort of list to determine women's landownership: widows are overrepresented as landowners on assessors' lists even though they had only a life interest in that

property, and are underrepresented as testators whose dower thirds would be distributed without probate at death.

Women clustered in the lower levels of landownership, but their real estate increased during the nineteenth century. Though they were few and their land worth less than men's, the number of women landowners increased faster than the increase in the female population of Berkshire County from 1820 to 1860. There were not only more women taxpayers, more female heads-of-households, and more women testators; women also acquired more valuable property as the century passed.³⁰⁷

This was the case in Dukes County as well as in Berkshire County. Dukes County women's inventories averaged \$1364 from 1840 to 1850 ($n = 7$), a hefty increase over the average of \$871 from 1800 to 1839 ($n = 3$).³⁰⁸ The increase in men bequeathing more than a dower share or life estate (but rather, full control of the entire estate) to their widows showed as an increase in women's wealth as measured by probate inventories which would not include dower already allocated by their husbands' wills.³⁰⁹ The following chart shows that the value of testatrices' land -- as well as the number of women landowners -- increased substantially from 1820 to 1860.

³⁰⁷ Jones found in her 1774 probate sample that New England men averaged four times as much wealth (total estate) as women. Alice Hanson Jones with Boris Simkovich, "The Wealth of Women, 1774," pp. 252-253. My thanks to Bruce Laurie for this reference.

³⁰⁸ Chused, 1376.

³⁰⁹ This is the point at which it becomes impossible to discuss women's testation patterns without including information on the changes in men's testation patterns -- an argument in favor of synthesis of gender studies. Without viewing each in light of the other, the results of neither make sense.

Chart 19. 92 Female Testators' Real Estate Compared with 75 Males'

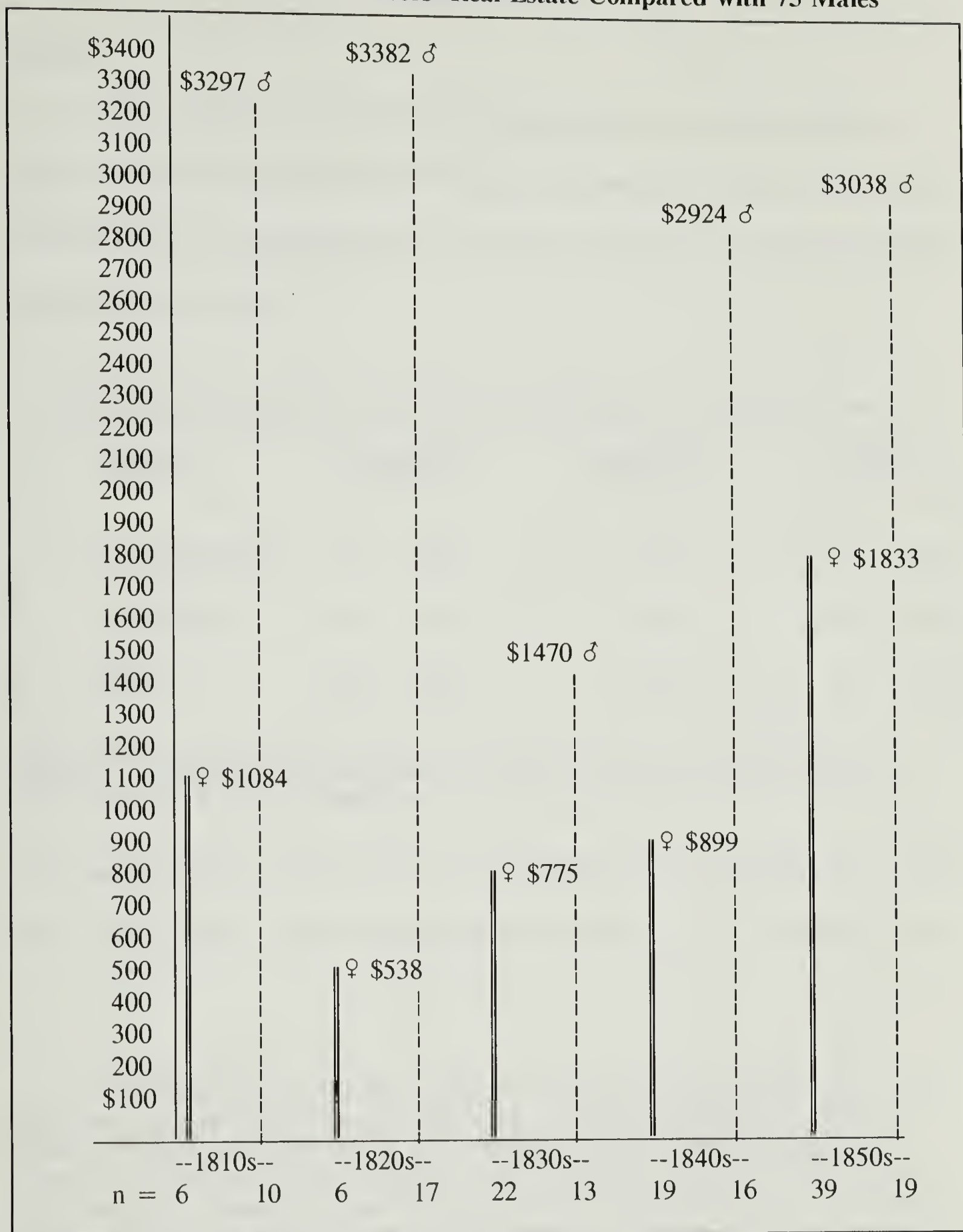


Chart 19. 92 Female Testators' Real Estate Compared with 75 Males'. From Berkshire County probate records, 1810-1859.

Bequest Patterns

Women

Single women followed a strikingly different pattern of distributing their possessions than did married women. Single women preferred to give their property to other women. The following chart shows the overall picture in comparing bequests by singles versus widows.

Chart 20. Comparison of Beneficiaries of Single and Married Women³¹⁰

<u>Testator</u>	<u>♀ beneficiary</u>		<u>♂ beneficiary</u>		<u>= divided</u>	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
83 single women	50	60%	21	25%	12	14%
151 widows	58	39%	58	39%	35	23%
all 234	108	46%	79	34%	47	20%

Chart 20. Comparison of Beneficiaries of Single Women and Married Women. From Berkshire County probate files.

Of 83 single women's wills written between 1780 and 1860, 71 showed a clear gender bias (whether male or female) in naming their beneficiaries, and 12 provided for an

³¹⁰ Percentages based on 83 single women who wrote wills in Berkshire County 1780-1860; three more wills were either illegible or too convoluted to ascertain the primary beneficiary. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding. Single women were identified by their own or others' reference to them as single or "Miss," and/or having the same surname as a father or brother identified in the will. Of the 200 widows or probable widows, 152 were sampled for primary beneficiary. There were 17 women with husbands living at the time they wrote their wills. An additional 40 women had undetermined marital status. [86 s + 91 wd + 109 w? + 17 m + 38 unkn = 341 total women's wills Berkshire County 1780-1860.]

Chused's Dukes County sample (1801-1850) of female testators included 24 women who were widow or single, 6 who were probably widow or single, 2 unmarried, and six whose marital status was unclear.

equitable division of property. Of the 71 who favored one sex over the other, 50 made females -- mothers, sisters, daughters or nieces -- their primary beneficiaries. Traditionally women bequeathed their personal property -- household furniture, wearing apparel, kitchenware -- to females who would use those items in the usual household division of labor. Single women, however, carried their bequests beyond tradition: of 27 single women who owned inventoried real estate, 20 (74%) passed it on to other women.³¹¹ The property involved ranged from a woodlot of a few acres to a house on a quarter-acre lot or an undivided seventh of a family homestead to a 230 acres of prime farmland in the Housatonic River valley. Single women who left real estate to males sometimes included a clause to provide lifetime support for a sister as did spinster Relief Nelson of Florida when she wrote her will in April 1852. She willed \$485 in real estate to her nephew Wallace Nelson, stipulating that Wallace could not sell it, but had to hold it in common with her sister Mlle. Tuttle. In another will, Nancy Smith asked her primary beneficiary, Clara Wells, to "do all she may feel able, to promote the happiness and comfort of Clarissa Wells her aunt by letting her reside in the house with her."³¹²

In addition, some single women spelled out other restrictions on a bequest to a married sister. When Dolly Cole wrote her will in the 1850s, she provided for her sister Susan Cole Parrish by stipulating that if Susan's husband Justus Parrish should

³¹¹ Of 83 single women's wills, 37 had inventories in Berkshire County Probate Court files; 11 other women bequeathed real estate but their files lacked inventories to show the details. Two of the single women's wills were so confusing and/or illegible that I did not include them in the statistical totals because I couldn't figure out who was getting what.

³¹² BCP #7815 & #7551.

predecease Susan, "said real estate shall not descend to [his] heirs but shall be subject to the sole disposal of the said Susan Parrish and her lawful heirs."³¹³

Berkshire County's earliest wills by women established the pattern of women favoring women: property would descend through a chain of women, traceable through a series of wills.³¹⁴ A widowed mother would will it to her daughters, who in turn would will it to one another. In 1789, widow Hannah Sherman of Adams noted in her will that her sons "had their share already," and divided her personal property between her unmarried daughters Sarah and Lydia Sherman. She stipulated that they would have the rental profits of her real estate "as long as they live together not marrying," but if either should "marry or die," the other, who remained single, would receive the property. Sarah wrote her will naming Lydia as beneficiary two years after her mother executed a will, and died the same month her mother died.³¹⁵ Providing for single daughters was a common theme in married women's wills, even when what was bequeathed was only a life estate.

³¹³ BCP #8826.

³¹⁴ This runs counter to prevailing wisdom that sons were the primary beneficiaries of real estate, and that, as Nancy Grey Osterud put it, "Women gained access to land only through fathers, brothers, husbands and sons." While that may have been strictly true in the Nanticoke Valley of New York, it was not strictly true in Berkshire County, Massachusetts. The difference may lie in Massachusetts' willingness to provide for its burgeoning population of unmarried women. Osterud, Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 85.

³¹⁵ BCP #8644 & 8645; BCP #1508 & 1509. Equating marriage with death was a valid comparison because upon marriage, a woman became feme covert, a nonperson in the sight of the law, classified with children, idiots and the mentally ill, who were supposedly equally unable to manage their own affairs. Clara Barton, in an 1860 letter, wrote of some female friends that she did not "know whether they are all dead or married . . ." CB to Bernard Vassall, July 28, 1860, Clara Barton Papers, Library of Congress. My thanks to Stephen Oates, who provided this reference.

When Abigail Walker died in 1806, she gave her daughter, also Abigail Walker, most of the estate. When the single Abigail Jr. died in 1828, she left personal property to a niece and put real estate in trust for her adopted daughter Sarah Hatch, "whose kind and affectionate attention . . . at all times and especially in sickness justly merits all that is in my power to give." Each generation thus provided support for single women in the generation to follow.³¹⁶

Single sisters named each other as beneficiaries. In 1824, Polly Trowbridge of Lenox began a chain of bequests that would extend for more than a quarter century. Polly left property to sisters Fanny and Lucinda; when Lucinda died in 1843, she left Fanny a life interest in her property, which at her death would pass to their sister Laura Derbyshire, and at her death would pass to Laura's daughters. When Fanny died in 1848, she also left her real estate to Laura "for her sole and separate use free from the control or interference of her husband."³¹⁷

The Chamberlin sisters of Dalton followed a similar line of bequests. When Eliza wrote her will in 1849, she left most of her property to her single sisters Henrietta and Sarah. When Sarah wrote her will two years later, she made her sister Henrietta her primary beneficiary.³¹⁸

³¹⁶ BCP #3554 & 4758.

³¹⁷ BCP #4365, 7239 & 7240. Fanny and Lucinda's wills were probated the same day.

³¹⁸ BCP #7507 & 7672.

Sally and Lucy Parsons of Egremont, who died within four days of each other in February 1858, named each other as beneficiaries. They held \$900 worth of real estate in common with their sister Betty Parsons.³¹⁹

When the singlewoman farmeress Sarah Goodspeed died, she left one of her farms to her longtime farmhand and friend Peter Duffy, who had worked for her since he was a teenager (more than 30 years) plus a life estate in her remaining real estate, which was then to be equally divided among the living daughters of her sisters. By so doing, she rewarded the man who had helped her earn her property, and also provided a measure of future independence for her nieces.³²⁰

Single women's favoritism toward females as beneficiaries began early in the nineteenth century (and may have begun even earlier, though the number of earlier women's wills is too small to provide a sufficient sample). Single women's bequests to females outnumbered bequests to males in wills written from 1820 through 1860:

Chart 21. Primary Beneficiary of Single Women

	Gender		N
	♀	♂	
1820s	6	1	7
1830s	7	3	10
1840s	16	7	23
1850s	17	3	20
Totals	46 - 77%	14 - 23%	60

Chart 21. Primary Beneficiary of Single Women.
From Berkshire County probate files, 1820-1860.

³¹⁹ BCP #8644 & 8645.

³²⁰ BCP #19035, 1850 & 1860 Census Population & Agriculture Schedules, Lee, MA.

More than three times as many females as males were awarded bequests by single women's wills from 1820 to 1860. Single women were not only a growing percentage of the population; they also ensured that other women could afford to remain single if they chose.

Widowed women, on the other hand, balanced their bequests to females and males. Of 151 women identifiable as widows or probable widows, 58 (39%) made males their primary beneficiaries, and 58 (39%) made females their primary beneficiaries. The other 35 (23%) showed no gender bias in bestowing their largesse; many included "equal division" clauses in their wills.

Of 17 women who were married when they wrote their wills, seven provided only a life estate for their husbands and ordered that at his death the property would be divided among their children, usually equally. (The irony is that this practice paralleled the traditional assignment of widow's dower under common law.) Six left all their property outright to their husbands, including one woman whose property had been deeded to her by her husband's father. Three married women left their property directly to their children or their siblings, bypassing husbands entirely.³²¹

³²¹ Chused found in Duke's County, Massachusetts, that 50% [46% in Berkshire County] of his sample of 30 women's wills made females the primary beneficiary; 33% [34%] made males the primary beneficiary, and 17% [20%] were mixed or evenly distributed, so his findings were similar to those in Berkshire County. He did not subdivide this portion of his study according to the marital status of the female testator. (Chused, 1377.)

Chused apparently did not consider the possibility that a county with a high population of seafarers such as Duke's County, unlike landlocked areas, might have chosen to put a larger chunk of its assets in the hands of the women, whose existence could have been considered less precarious.

Thus, single women favored women when passing their property on to their beneficiaries, while widows practiced a more gender-balanced distribution. Several interpretations could explain this phenomenon. First, women who had remained single would have more incentive for helping their sisters, mothers, daughters and nieces maintain their own independence -- because, to judge from the evidence, single women better understood the difficulties and the benefits of remaining independent. Property, above all else, could assuage those difficulties: hence their zeal to aid other women with the benefits of property ownership. Second, married women were perhaps more conventional than were single women, who had successfully withstood social and economic pressures to marry. Widows, in following convention by marrying, perhaps followed convention as well in distributing property when they wrote their wills. Overall, female beneficiaries had the edge in Berkshire County women's bequests: 46% to females, 34% to males, and 20% equally divided.

Some women spelled out in their wills exactly why they were giving property to women. For instance, when Edith Brattle in 1803 bequeathed all of her \$645 worth of personal property to her adopted daughter Ruth Cooper, she noted

It is not for want of great affection for my adopted son James Butler that I make no provision for him. His mother being heir to part of my deceased husband's estate, and he being a nephew of the other six heirs, I confidently hope they will make a better provision for him than I have for her.³²²

Jerusha Burghardt added a codicil to her will just before she died in 1822, adding to the personal property she had planned to leave to her daughter Hannah:

³²² BCP #2277.

Hannah has been my faithful nurse by night and by day through a long and tedious sickness, and as a partial compensation, as a token of my remembrance of her kindness and faithfulness to me in my last distressing sickness, I have thought it my duty to make this last bequest to her.³²³

On the other hand, women also felt compelled to state exactly why they were not leaving property to other heirs at law, or why they were leaving it in trust instead of bequeathing it outright. In 1839, Sarah Kilburn clearly delineated for posterity just why she was not allowing her son Jonathan immediate control of her property, which would be held in trust until he met certain conditions. The purpose of the trust was

that he may be secured on the one hand from the wants consequent upon dissipation and aided on the other hand [toward] the industrious and prudent prosecution of business. And should my Son be temperate and industrious and in the opinion of the trustee prudent in the management of his business . . .

the trustee could pay over whatever Jonathan might need. Since Sarah Kilburn held notes against Jonathan that amounted to \$15,000 of the \$17,428 of her estate, her will may have amounted to an exercise in futility.³²⁴

Keziah Markham left an even more pointed message to her siblings when she wrote her will in 1853, "To my brothers and sisters . . . or their heirs, I give nothing, because it would do no good." Her \$702 worth of real and personal property went to one nephew, the son of a deceased sister.³²⁵

³²³ BCP #4044.

³²⁴ BCP #6342.

³²⁵ BCP #7961.

Men

Single women were not alone in favoring females as beneficiaries. A sample of 124 or 6.7% of the 1838 wills written by men in Berkshire County 1800-1860 shows that there was a sea change in males' testation patterns between 1800 and 1860, and that it began in the 1830s. The following chart shows how men favored males as heirs at the beginning of the century, but by midcentury had shifted their property distribution to be more equally inclusive of females.

Chart 22. Primary Beneficiary of 120 Berkshire County Men

	<u>♀ beneficiary</u>	<u>♂ beneficiary</u>	<u>= divided</u>	<u>N</u>
1800s	3	10	3	16
1810s	3	9	5	17
1820s	<u>1</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>18</u>
	7 - 14%	32 - 63%	12 - 24%	51
1830s	9	10	1	20
1840s	10	9	2	21
1850s	<u>14</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>28</u>
	33 - 48%	27 - 39%	9 - 13%	69
N =	40 - 33%	59 - 49%	21 - 18%	

Chart 22. Primary Beneficiary of 120 Berkshire County Men. From Berkshire County probate files, 1820-1860.

The percentage of male testators favoring female over male heirs nearly tripled 1830-1859 over what it had been 1800-1829, increasing from 14% to 48% in this sample of testators.³²⁶ Female beneficiaries gained -- apparently at the expense of males. The

³²⁶ Men favoring women beneficiaries were not richer or poorer than propertied men in general. A sample of 27 female-favoring men's wills with property inventories shows their real estate clustered at lower and middle levels: 8 <\$500, 4 \$500-999, 5 \$1000s, 4 \$2000s, 4 (continued...)

48% of men whose bequests favored females was close to the 46% of women who willed their property primarily to females. (See Chart 17.) Once again a sharp change appears in the 1830s -- evidence that men considered women more capable of managing business affairs -- or more in need of the protection of separate property -- or both -- in the 1830s than in previous decades. Though many women so favored were testators' widows, other women were also given the power of control over property. When Chauncey Hulet died in 1857, his will specified that his daughter-in-law, not his son, should control his bequest. "I do bequeath unto Harriet R. Hulet, wife of my son Orin Hulet, the sum of seven hundred dollars to her," Chauncey Hulet stipulated, "in her sole right, independent of any control by her husband, the said Orin Hulet" ³²⁷ Harriet was Hulet's primary beneficiary; his sister received a small legacy.

In one case in the late 1840s, a father uncharacteristically made no bequest to an adult single daughter when he wrote his will, but instructed his two sons to care for her. John Cooper of Stockbridge left his farm to his wife Mary only until all their children reached the age of 21 (with a dower third after that) when the real estate was to be divided between his two sons, "on condition that they provide a comfortable home with sufficient food and wearing apparel for their sister Mary during her natural life." This unusual provision is explained by the federal census

³²⁶(...continued)

\$3000-4999, 2 \$5000+. Though the sample is too small to invite statistical comparisons, it suggests that a man did not have to be wealthy to favor females as beneficiaries. Real estate ranged from zero to \$22,335 in this group; personal estate, \$107 to \$18,963.

³²⁷ BCP #8541.

population schedule, which described Mary Jr. as "idiotic."³²⁸ Disabled heirs, like intemperate heirs, were often explicitly provided for in ways that gave responsibility to more able siblings.

By the 1850s, wives were frequently bequeathed full ownership of their husbands' property. Though men's bequests occasionally resembled dower, husbands provided for their widows to live with more financial freedom than had been allowed earlier generations. Even wives who were bequeathed only a life estate generally received lifetime use of all the property both real and personal; very few husbands assigned only the widow's thirds. Perhaps this came to pass because men wanted their wives to have the protection of property ownership going into a second marriage or sufficient means to avoid remarriage altogether. Perhaps the boom and bust economy had shown them the precariousness of financial life in the capitalist economy, and they wanted their wives to have as much security as possible. Perhaps the traditional widow's thirds were no longer thought sufficient to support a woman throughout her widowhood, which could last many years. Perhaps customs of land distribution to sons had changed and property had already been distributed before most men made their wills, as had Marick Parrish of West Stockbridge, who noted when he wrote his will in 1845 that he had already provided for his children and therefore bequeathed his entire estate to his wife Sally.³²⁹ If most of men's estates had already been given to sons before wills were made, then midcentury testators' apparent favoritism toward wives and daughters was a dubious honor.

³²⁸ BCP #7074; 1850 U.S. Census, Stockbridge, MA.

³²⁹ BCP #8405 (Marick Parrish).

Testation patterns may have changed because of increasing outmigration. If women -- wives and daughters -- were favored because male heirs had emigrated west, and only the women wanted the Berkshire homestead, it would make sense for fathers to bequeath their property to the women who stayed behind. In the 1840s and 1850s executors routinely noted heirs' "place of residence unknown." The known locations of heirs often included Illinois, Ohio, California, Michigan, New York and Pennsylvania. Some families had scarcely any heirs left in the commonwealth by 1860. When John Sweet died in 1848, his executrix told the court that his four heirs-at-laws' place of residence was unknown.³³⁰ Testators often favored those still in the area, as did Benjamin Briggs, who left life estates in farms to local daughters, with eventual transfer to their daughters and no mention of sons or of other grandchildren whose residence was reported as unknown.³³¹

The effect of emigration was a breakdown in family communication, shown by the many executors unable to locate testators' grandchildren, especially after 1850. Increasing outmigration in the 1840s and 1850s may have provoked those with property to allocate property to their children (or at least their sons) earlier in life, forfeiting the control property had given earlier generations of parents. (Early relinquishment of land could also be seen as an attempt at control by inducing children to settle nearby.) If unmarried daughters and wives were the ones who stayed in Berkshire County, they may have been the only ones left to receive bequests of local property. At the same time, that property, withheld until a daughter reached

³³⁰ BCP #7216.

³³¹ BCP #7140.

middle age or even old age, could represent the last effort at parental control -- over daughters, but not over sons.

Sole and Separate Use Provisions

Many testators provide "sole and separate" ownership for female heirs. Most Berkshire County wills with such stipulations were written in the 1840s or 1850s, but the earliest dated back to 1789, when Hannah Sherman wrote that if either of her daughters should "marry or die," the remainder of the estate would go to the one remaining single. The commonest way of protecting the bequest from the potential depredations of a husband was to bequeath the property "in fee simple," "for her sole and separate use, free and clear from all claim of her said husband or his creditors," or "free from the debts, control or interference of her husband," "no part subject to the control of her husband," or some variation on that theme.³³²

Woolen manufacturer Duty Tyler of Adams, whose estate was worth more than \$70,000 in 1857, expressed clearly that he wanted his married daughter, Maria Louisa Perry, to have her half of the estate "free from the interference and control of her husband." There was a growing tendency for Berkshire County men to so stipulate in the mid-nineteenth century even when there wasn't a particular male from whom their female heirs' property needed protection.

In addition to the men whose wills included "sole and separate" or "fee simple" clauses, many men used less precise language that may have been an attempt

³³² A study of 38 Dukes County, Massachusetts, women's wills indicates that separate estate provisions appeared in some wills after 1830. Chused, 1372 n. 58.

to secure property to female heirs, but which would not have adhered to the letter of the law. In 1804, Job Milk of Alford returned to his unnamed wife the land "in [his] name" which she had brought to their marriage -- but did not stipulate full ownership or a life estate. When Elienai Robbins in 1807 provided that his widow's half of the real estate was to be "wholly at her disposal," or when Ahab Hill in 1836 bequeathed his entire estate to his wife Ruth, "forever," those bequests were more open to question than "gentleman" Ichabod Emmons' stipulation in 1839 that his wife Mindwell should receive real estate "in fee simple" and that she should be "sole Judge of such necessity" to sell property if necessary for her to maintain "her comfortable subsistence." Preserved Fish bequeathed all but \$25 of his \$4600 holdings in Cheshire to his wife Amy in 1851, "to have and to hold and dispose of as she pleases," but the will was challenged by siblings dissatisfied with their \$5 shares. Though Fish undoubtedly meant for Amy to have nearly all of his estate, he neglected to nail down his bequest with the correct language. The intentions of Gabriel Matthews were reasonably clear when he stipulated in 1856 that his estate real and personal, including his farm, was to go to his wife Ruth Angeline, and that he was "relying on her good sense and discretion in using, occupying and disposing of the same during her natural life and meaning to place [his] whole property real and personal entirely at her disposal through life and at her death." Though Cyprian Branch of Richmond left his entire estate to his wife's "sole use, forever," it was cold comfort: he owned only \$251 worth of personalty and no realty. Some men shrank

from leaving anything at all to a woman, but instructed sons, as did Liberty Bowker, to provide for their sister "as long as she [is] in needy circumstances."³³³

Female testators also included "sole and separate use" clauses in wills to set up a barrier between the female beneficiary and her husband or potential husband and his creditors. Female beneficiaries were usually members of the immediate family; of 23 women's wills with "sole and separate use" clauses, the beneficiaries included 11 daughters, six sisters, three granddaughters, and one mother. Of 16 men's wills with "sole and separate" bequests, ten were to wives, five to daughters (most of them married), and one to a daughter-in-law. Joel Clark left his wife Ruth life use of \$3000 in real estate and outright ownership of \$744 in personal estate in 1824. When Ruth died in 1857, she willed life interest in the remains of her estate to her sister Abigail Kellogg, ordering that it pass next to Abigail Ensign, "to her sole and separate use, free and clear from all claim of her said husband, or his creditors."³³⁴

What these stipulations make clear is that by the 1840s and 1850s, Berkshire County women and men with property to bequeath recognized the dangers posed by profligate, intemperate or incompetent or speculator-investor husbands. Even husbands with the best intentions had lost their families' entire means of support in the panic and depression of the late 1830s, leaving families destitute. Berkshire County's testators both male and female acted on the advice -- whether expressed or implied -- doled out by books, articles, and fiction, on the subject of women needing to protect their assets. Women were, after all, tasked with protecting their families'

³³³ BCP #2300, 2510, 5741, 6046, 6770, 6935, 7519, 8313, 8551.

³³⁴ BCP #4223 & 8809.

resources and as family caretakers, and testators were not rejecting women's domestic sphere, but rather, enlarging it to include financial considerations.³³⁵ As boardinghouse keeper Rebecca Hull Clarke, a widow trying to establish six children in the world, said to Caroline Dall, "Women ought not to give up their property to men, or even ask their advice about it. The best men will prop up their shaky plans with a woman's money; but women should watch men, see where shrewd men put their money, and do as they do, not as they say." She succeeded spectacularly in her investments.³³⁶ Mothers, grandmothers, sisters, daughters, fathers and husbands wrote wills with "sole and separate use" clauses to protect women they loved.

It is worth noting that the women who wrote such provisions into their wills were not necessarily wealthy. On the contrary, their total estates ranged from a low of \$146 in personal estate to a high of \$4610 total real and personal estate, with the majority being around \$500. Most of these women were not rich -- but they appreciated the necessity for a woman to have assets of her own, whether she was already married or a possible candidate for marriage. Men who favored female beneficiaries generally had assets, but few of them were wealthy. With nearly half of testators favoring women as beneficiaries, the unprecedented shift in patterns of property ownership transferred more assets to women by the 1850s than had been the case earlier, and men had joined women as allies in boosting the autonomy of their female heirs.

³³⁵ Chused, 1412, 1414-1415.

³³⁶ Dall, The College, The Market, and The Court, 461; Who Was Who in America, 1607-1896, rev ed. (Chicago: Maquis, 1967), p. 177.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

When Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote, "We are sepulchred alive in this close world, and want more room," she spoke for a generation of women with rising expectations. Women refused to marry at unprecedented rates, seeking to live their own lives without submitting to husbands. As the cult of domesticity grew confining, some women rejected the role that a male-dominated society sought to impose on them. They established man-free households. The market revolution provided them with new social mores as well as pay from jobs unavailable to their grandmothers. Once women had their own money, some were loath to turn it over to husbands who could do as they chose with it. Women who did marry, married later, and many had assets of their own. Education, writing, teaching, business ownership and wage labor gave them the independence earlier generations had lacked. And when western Massachusetts parents bequeathed property, they supported their daughters; when single women made out their wills, they supported their spinster sisters.

The greatest step toward independence was to remain unmarried. A maiden aunt had more options than a wife, and in nineteenth century rural Massachusetts, there were many maiden aunts. With money or property of their own, women understood that "the man's need of the woman . . . is greater than the woman's need of the man" Browning's words, from the semiautobiographical Aurora Leigh, expressed not only her opinion but that of many of her readers, some of whom echoed her sentiments. Browning's heroine, rejecting early marriage in favor of a

career, saw that a man considered "a woman as the complement of his sex merely." If she married, she "would not dare call my soul my own."³³⁷ Seeing marriage as a contract, women increasingly insisted that it be a contract between equals -- or they would remain out of the marriage market entirely. Higher levels of property ownership as well as wage work enabled western Massachusetts women to remain single; changes in married women's property law increased wives' fiscal autonomy.

In the 150 years from the founding of Massachusetts Bay Colony to the Revolution, women's property rights under Massachusetts law remained essentially unchanged. In the early federal period, more women landowners appeared on the tax lists as increasing numbers of women opted not to marry and widows chose to not remarry -- a radical departure from Puritan colonial custom, which expected every woman to marry and every widow to remarry. In western Massachusetts, increasing singleness was accompanied by increasing property ownership by women as well as increasing numbers of women heads-of-households. Increased singleness, as well as increased property ownership, set the stage for the Married Women's Property Acts in Massachusetts. Had no married women owned property, there would have been no need for it to be protected. Had no married women worked for wages, there would have been no need to protect their income. Conversely, had the economy been stable, perhaps men would have declined to institutionalize the protection those acts provided for family property. But by providing property rights for married women, men

³³⁷ Elizabeth Barrett Browning, The Poetical Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, (New York: 1876) v. 2, pp. 212, 220, 238, 265, 314-315. Mary Abby Dodge, teasing a male friend about living alone, wrote, "Men are poor, helpless dependent pitiful creatures when left to their own resources." [Dodge,] v. 2, p. 622.

bridged the gap between the private sphere of domesticity and the public sphere of politics by allowing more women property ownership, the traditional prerequisite for voting rights.³³⁸ Tying women's voting rights to taxation received lip service in the Massachusetts legislature in 1855. In an 1855 debate on more equitably distributing taxation, state senator Elihu Baker of Middlesex County noted that if representation depended on taxation, then women who paid taxes should be allowed to vote.³³⁹ But that was a very good year for women who had agitated for change.

Legislators in other states had already acted to secure the property rights of married women. Some did so because they wanted to protect their daughters' property from husbands' dissipation. Other legislators, married to women of means, may have wanted to shelter family assets in the event of financial reverses. And others yet may have been concerned about the number of single women who had chosen to remain unmarried to protect their own property and/or autonomy. Regardless of their motives, their actions to protect married women's property gave women more influence within the domestic sphere.

Nineteenth century women refused to live the same sorts of lives their mothers and grandmothers lived. They were better educated than earlier generations and they had increasing options: to work in mills, to start businesses, to marry later, to marry

³³⁸ Basch, "Legal Fiction," 355.

³³⁹ "Massachusetts Legislature," Boston Post, April 10, 1855, p. 4.

younger men, to have fewer children, or to not marry at all.³⁴⁰ Nineteenth-century women property owners and women heads of households enjoyed all these privileges, unlike their grandmothers, who were born in an age when Massachusetts women were bound by Puritan expectations of femininity. That earlier era could hardly have been a "golden age" for women; the nineteenth century brought them increasing economic freedom. There are several ways these changes show up in western Massachusetts.

First, increasing numbers of women appeared on the tax rolls and as heads-of-households. This demographic revolution shows that women had achieved a remarkable level of independence over the eighteenth century, whether as widows or as single women. Parents increasingly bequeathed property to their daughters instead of handing it all to their sons. Testators included "sole and separate" use clauses to protect women's property, helping the daughters of Massachusetts gain autonomy. Property ownership gave women options they would have lacked without some financial independence. Even a woman in the market for a husband had more options if she had property. Whether great or small, property gave her leverage that she would not have otherwise. Doubtless some women declined to use that leverage.

³⁴⁰ By 1858, the change in women's marital choices appeared in Atlantic Monthly; "Farming in New England," noted that farmers' daughters would, "nine times out of ten, marry a mechanic in preference to a farmer. They know that marrying a farmer is serious business. They remember their worn-out mothers." (Dublin, Women at Work, 55.) In addition, Christopher Clark's tabulation of completed family size in Amherst and Hadley shows a marked drop for those who married in the 1830s or 1840s: from six or seven births per family to under 4.5. Women increased their autonomy by decreasing their family size. (Clark, 138.) See also Daniel Scott Smith, "Family Limitation, Sexual Control, and Domestic Feminism in Victorian America," Clio's Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women, Mary Hartman and Lois Banner, eds. (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

Others, however, did. And whether they used it to boost their autonomy within marriage or outside of marriage, they had more options with it than without it.

Second, unlike widows of the colonial era who remarried promptly, women of the nineteenth century were in no rush. Though some did not own their property outright, but had it for their widowhood or lifetime (whichever ended first), the fact that more and more widows showed up on the tax lists indicates that more and more widows postponed or refused remarriage. More husbands vested control of their total estate, not just a third, in their wives -- or bequeathed it outright so their widows could enjoy full use of the property.

Third, education and employment were important in establishing autonomy. Better educated than their mothers or grandmothers, nineteenth-century women were more capable of supporting themselves outside marriage. There were more ways for a woman to sustain herself in the increasingly capitalistic economy. The increase in unpropertied female heads-of-households shows that there were more women living independently even before industrialization expanded in western Massachusetts. (Industrial wages were not the primary means of independence for women between 1800 and 1820 in western Massachusetts. On the contrary, few women on the tax lists appeared on census lists as engaged in manufacturing occupations. Widows' dower was apparently the primary means of support of most women taxpayers with real estate in the first two decades of the century.)

Fourth, women were repeatedly warned of the hazards of marriage: popular literature was filled with anecdotes of profligate men who squandered their families' precious resources. A literate woman could hardly have missed this message because

it was trumpeted in nineteenth-century literature -- and Massachusetts had so many educated women in the nineteenth century that 20% of Massachusetts' white women were schoolteachers before the Civil War.³⁴¹ There was an increasing body of advice of the pitfalls of married life, which focused on protecting women's property as well as their persons. The message found a receptive audience. Women "bought" that advice both literally and figuratively and singleness increased accordingly. It is therefore not difficult to imagine why the Arms sisters, for instance, banded together with their small allotments of land to help support each other into old age. And, considering that model for independence, it is not hard to see why other women who, individually lacking property and the economic support that real estate would provide, banded together in feminine households for mutual support and comfort.³⁴²

Thus education, employment, bequests, property, property rights and singleness worked together to ensure that the whole of late nineteenth century women's freedoms would be greater than the sum of the parts. Without property or employment, women were dependent. With property or employment, they could enjoy unprecedented autonomy, particularly if they remained single. Increased career opportunities during the Civil War gave women increased means to acquire property. Within marriage, early nineteenth-century women were stripped of their property rights (and for some, their dignity) which gave some of their daughters ample reason

³⁴¹ Bernard & Vinovskis, 333.

³⁴² Though most women property owners fell in the middle range, there were wide variations in the levels of property ownership and income and therefore economic security -- so there were wide variations in the degree of economic independence women taxpayers had.

for remaining single. With so many spinsters, everyone knew at least one woman who remained unmarried from fear that marriage would be a cruel and permanent trap. The high rate of singlehood in Massachusetts may have prompted legislators to liberalize divorce laws and expand married women's property rights. Certainly those who used the expression, "sepulchred alive" considered marriage a slow, living death for some women. The metaphor is eloquent enough to be persuasive.

As a result, testation and women's landownership patterns shifted, as did the gender ratio of women's households. More women achieved financial independence, some of them enabled by fathers, mothers, and sisters who bequeathed them enough property to remain single, or by protecting that property to their sole use through specific bequests that would protect the women's portions even after marriage.

Before 1860, Massachusetts women increased their educational prospects, using republican motherhood as their rationale. Having increased their education, they proceeded to increase their autonomy, by staying single, by seeking employment, by marrying later, by maintaining control of assets within marriage, by refusing to have as many children as their foremothers, by bequeathing property to other women to pass on whatever independence they could. Though all women would not have used all these strategies, most women used at least two: average age at marriage and birth rate bear that out. Though some upwardly-mobile urban middle-class women may have accepted the cult of domesticity, they could not have been the majority of middle-class white women. If most women had actually behaved to the prescriptive ideal of purity, piety, submissiveness, and domesticity, there would have been no need for conservative anti-feminists to market it. (And a "cult" is by definition a

group of limited views.) In this thesis are examples of women of all classes who did not adhere to the domestic ideal: farmwives, professionals' wives, widows, singlewomen, businesswomen, wage workers, entrepreneurs, heiresses. None of those women conformed to the narrow strictures of the cult of true womanhood. Perhaps they had too much common sense. Perhaps they could not economically afford domesticity. Or perhaps they just did not want to be "sepulchred alive." The conservative ideologues -- ministers, physicians and authors of prescriptive works -- who promoted the cult of true womanhood had pecuniary interests that depended on women being pious, submissive and domestic. If most women had fit that ideal, there would have been no outcry to promote it. Massachusetts women benefitted from a variety of strategies both subtle and overt to increase their autonomy beyond that extolled by domesticity's proponents.

Change, for Massachusetts women, was notable between 1800 and 1860. In the final analysis, social change that threatened the status quo also provided benefits to Massachusetts women.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CENSUS VS. TAX ASSESSORS' LISTS:

INACCURACY IN ASSESSING LANDOWNERSHIP

In a sample of four western Massachusetts towns (Pittsfield, Lanesborough, Ashfield and Deerfield), the real estate holdings enumerated for the 1850 census bear little resemblance to the real estate holdings in the towns' tax assessors' 100% valuation lists. As a reflection of real estate ownership, the 1850 census falls considerably short of reality as established by local tax assessors.

In terms of women landowners: the census showed 76 women; the assessors' lists showed 90; but only half of the women property owners on the assessors' lists show up on the census as landowners. The census correctly identified just 50% (45/90) of women landowners on the assessors' lists.

Furthermore, none of the 45 actual real estate owners who appeared in the census lists had an accurate value assigned to her real estate. Very few (7) of the 40 owned, according to the census, an amount of real estate valued within 20% of the assessors' valuation. Most census real estate values for women identifiable in the assessors' lists showed a disparity of from one-third to three times as much as the amount assessed by the town.

Though some researchers have suggested that women were a "negligible" proportion of landowners and therefore unrepresentative of the wider community, in this case the wider community's real estate holdings were also inaccurately valued by census takers. The following chart shows how smaller landowners, male as well as female, were shockingly overvalued and/or undercounted by census takers in these towns:

Comparison of Landowners: Assessors Versus Census Lists

	Pittsfield		Lanesboro		Deerfield		Ashfield	
	Asr	Cen	Asr	Cen	Asr	Cen	Asr	Cen
< \$500	131	38	38	23	117	25	109	43
\$500-999	148	78	25	18	78	46	89	43
\$1000-1999	151	121	28	25	74	67	62	82
\$2000-2999	57	67	23	12	53	59	9	47
\$3000-4999	76	71	22	28	41	54	1	26
\$5000-9999	55	46	6	21	19	35	0	5
\$10,000-19,999	16	28	1	2	2	6	0	0
> \$20,000	3	13	0	2	0	2	0	0
Totals	637	462	143	131	384	294	270	246

The grand total for all four towns: assessors taxed 1434 people for real estate; the census enumerated 1133 as landowners. The grossest error lies at the lowest levels of land ownership, so that smaller holdings are substantially underrepresented in the

census.³⁴³ Enumerators -- or assistant marshals, as they were called in 1850 -- were directed to ascertain the value of real estate owned by each individual enumerated, with no minimum acceptable value, according to their instructions.³⁴⁴ Evidently that proved beyond their ability to do accurately.

It would be advisable, therefore, for researchers tempted to rely on the federal census for real estate information to instead consult local tax lists when accurate data is needed. Though the census may for rare individuals realistically assess their real estate holdings, it should be considered unreliable for most individuals and unrepresentative of the population as a whole.

³⁴³ The town of Blandford may show a higher correlation between census and tax assessors' lists, but because assessors identified women landowners by their husbands' names while the census identified them by the woman's first name and surname, it would be necessary to do some minor genealogical research on each of those women to determine if in fact Mrs. John Doe was the same individual as Jane Doe. Though there was some correlation, several individuals were not easily identifiable even using Doris Hayden's "Blandford Families." Blandford's real estate values were just as inaccurate as the other three towns cited.

³⁴⁴ Carroll D. Wright, The History and Growth of the United States Census (Washington D.C.: 1900), p. 152.

APPENDIX B

METHODOLOGY

Tax Records

I began by calling various town halls and libraries in western Massachusetts, to see which had local tax lists available for 1800, 1810 and 1820. I wanted to have data from a variety of towns of various sizes and of a reasonable geographic distribution in Berkshire County and early Hampshire County. My distribution plan was limited by the availability of records, as well as by the time required to visit more remote locations. Because the majority of the early nineteenth-century population lived in rural areas or small towns, I wanted to stick to those sorts of locations. Though it would in some ways be easier to study Boston or New York, the female property owners in an urban area would not be representative of the state.

Having determined which towns had tax lists for the years needed, I combed those records with the usual blessings for the departed tax assessors who had clear and legible handwriting and used good ink.

After several false starts, I settled on a formula for data collection:

First, I checked the census for each town for the years in question, and noted the women who were heads of households (HOHs), and the size and composition of their households. I recorded the number of households and the whole population, as well as the number of white women, when that number was available. (I used white women only because in the early censuses, people of color were not identified by gender or age.) That way, I had some basic demographic data available, and had an idea of what to expect when I delved into the tax records.

Second, I combed the tax records for the same years -- or for near years. Inevitably, some communities had no records for census years, but did have records for intervening years -- which is why Lanesborough data came from such a mishmash of sources: the Massachusetts Direct Tax of 1798 list had to serve for Lanesborough's 1800, the local list for 1808 had to do for 1810, and 1820 was, fortunately, available. Because handwriting was dubious in some cases for either the tax records or for the census, it was important to have names from both, so that missing or barely legible names from one list could be confirmed or eliminated as possible women property owners.

In some communities, there was a high correlation between the two lists; in others, the tax assessor and the census taker might have been working in different towns, because the assessors list of women property owners bore no resemblance to the enumerator's list of women heads of households. Possible reasons why lists do not correlate include variations on the idea that a real estate taxpayer is not necessarily a head-of-household. A HOH may be a renter, not an owner, of real estate. Conversely, a taxpayer may own real estate but live in the household of another family member who would be the person listed on the census as HOH.

There were several problems in data collection. The first was the spotty nature of town tax records -- as already mentioned. Where these differences occur, I have noted them. The second, and by far the most annoying, is that tax assessors, who knew what their valuation rate was, did not bother to record it for the benefit of the researcher using those records nearly 200 years later. Add to that fact the problem that different lists had survived in different towns, so that in Stockbridge, one of the lists was apparently a list of 100% real

estate valuations with numbers ranging into the thousands, while another was a highway tax list, with values under ten dollars -- and most towns had other valuation lists with nearly no numbers over \$400, or state tax lists with numbers ranging only in the tens of dollars. In short, nothing was standardized -- not even the valuation rate -- and only one list each in Stockbridge, Pittsfield and Dalton showed what the real estate was actually worth (100%) valuation.

After considerable frustration, I hit upon two ways of determining the approximate actual value of real estate in each list.

For tax lists near 1800, I compared widows' real estate values with the 1798 Massachusetts Direct Tax lists, correlating schedule C with schedule D. I stuck to widows when possible because they were the least likely group to do a lot of buying and selling of real estate, because in most cases, they did not have outright ownership of their property, but use of it only for the duration of their lifetime, or dower rights. They would therefore be the most static class of real estate owners, which would make it possible to ascertain the approximate valuation rate. When the 1798 tax valuation showed \$100 worth of real estate, and the valuation listed for that individual in 1800 was \$5.50, that showed that the valuation for 1800 for that community was about 5.5%. I checked those figures by comparing the tax rates for all the widows on both lists, dropping the lowest and highest percentages and averaging the others. That was how I dealt with 1800.

As noted elsewhere, after collecting data for 1810 from the first few towns, I found it was so nearly identical to the 1800 data that I discontinued 1810 data collection as not a cost-effective use of time.

Dealing with 1820 was more involved, except for Dalton and Granby, which had 100% valuation lists showing every piece of taxable real and personal estate -- down to the last pig -- for every property owner, and Pittsfield, which had partial lists showing at least half of the town, so it was easy to determine the valuation rate for the town as a whole. For each of the other towns, it was necessary to go to probate records to determine the approximate value of the recent widows' shares of the real estate, and compare that with the valuation amounts listed. Using more than one estate, I averaged the percentages as outlined above.

In this laborious fashion, I established the percent of real estate valuation, which ranged from as low as 2.5% to near 10%, depending on the town, year, and list. Each town taxed differently, and some assessors made errors in arithmetic, to boot. Though there are doubtless some errors in my estimate of various towns' valuations, due to the inexact method I was forced to use (lacking 100% valuation data used by the assessors), the data shows a logical distribution within most of the towns, as well as in the aggregate. It is my hope that the disparities, if any, are averaged out in the totals -- as well as in the fact that different kinds of land in different towns was worth different amounts. The important thing is not so much what each individual's property was worth, but where she stood in the economic hierarchy of western Massachusetts. It was therefore necessary to convert property owners' real estate worth to 100% valuations so that the totals would be "all apples or all oranges" and not just a bushel of mixed fruit.

Working with 1850 and 1860 lists was comparatively easy: most of the lists available were 100% valuation lists.

After establishing 100% values, I tallied male and female property ownership in a number of dollar categories, compiled totals and proceeded with analysis.

As I worked my way through the first two communities, it became obvious that in most towns there was a high correlation between women property owners' surnames and surnames of other property owners in the same community. In most towns, women who

owned property were surrounded by male property owners -- or at least one male property owner -- with the same surname. Considering that many of these women were widows, they must have been living in the same community as their late husbands, and if they were never married, were living in the same town with fathers, brothers, or other male kin. Having noticed the high correlation, I proceeded to systematically gather that information as I noted the women's names. Slightly more than half lived in towns where there were male taxpayers of the same surname -- a logical result of partible inheritance, where the father's land was divided among his sons, who brought their wives to live there.

Also, a number of women property owners were in no hurry to marry, or to remarry, because they persisted on the real estate lists for a remarkably long time. Where I have been able to gather biographical information on those persisters, I have included it.

Wills

For studying female testation patterns, I read all the wills written by women in Berkshire County from 1780 until 1860 -- a total of 341. I abstracted information into Alpha4, a database management software, entering data so I could sort alphabetically by name, probate date, will date, amount of real estate, amount of personal estate, town, marital status, or maiden name. I also included two memo fields: one detailed the beneficiaries and their relationships to the deceased where noted, and the other included abstracted information on the source of the woman's property, usually gleaned from the will of one of her relatives.

I also read 57 of those women's fathers' and husbands' wills, which were not entered into Alpha4, but were perused to determine how their wives and/or daughters, who had later written wills of their own, had acquired property. An additional sample of 90 men's wills was read -- about 5% of each decade 1800-1860 -- to determine changes in men's testation patterns over time.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Records

Acts and Resolves Passed by the General Court of Massachusetts. Boston: Secretary of the Commonwealth, 1845, 1846, 1855, 1857.

Adams, Hannah. A Memoir of Miss Hannah Adams. Boston: 1832.

Alcott, Louisa M. Journals of Louisa May Alcott. Boston: Little Brown, 1989.

----- Work: A Story of Experience. Boston: 1875.

Ashfield 1799 Tax List; 1820, 1850 & 1860 Valuation Lists. Ashfield Town Hall.

Bailey, Mrs. Abigail. Memoirs of Mrs. Abigail Bailey . . . Ethan Smith, ed. Boston: 1815.

Berkshire County Commissioners' Licensing Records, 1800-1860. County Clerk's Office, Berkshire County Superior Court, Courthouse, Pittsfield, MA.

Berkshire County Probate Court Records.

Berkshire County Superior Court pre-1850 Divorce Index.

Bigelow, John P. Statistical Tables: Exhibiting the Condition and Products of Certain Branches of Industry in Massachusetts, For the Year Ending April 1, 1837. Boston: 1838.

Blandford Assessors' Tax Lists: 1836-1856, 1858-1871; Valuation Book, 1850-1860. Blandford Town Hall.

Boston Post. April-May, 1855.

Briggs, Caroline [Clapp]. Reminiscences and Letters of Caroline Clapp Briggs, George S. Merriam, ed. Boston: 1897.

Brown, Charles Brockden. Alcuin: A Dialogue. Grossman: 1971 reprint of 1798 original.

Browne, William Bradford, comp. "Transcript Death Records," Miscellany from the William Bradford Browne Collection. Pittsfield, MA: Berkshire Family History Association, 1992. Berkshire Athenaeum.

Browning, Elizabeth Barrett. The Poetical Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 2 v. New York: 1876.

Bryant, Sarah Snell. Diaries, 1795-1847. Houghton Library, Harvard. Microfilm at Old Sturbridge Village Research Library, Sturbridge, MA.

- Bryant, William Cullen. "Autobiography," in Parke Godwin, A Biography of William Cullen Bryant, vol 2. New York: Appleton, 1883.
- Letters of William Cullen Bryant, v. 1 (1809-1836). William Cullen Bryant II and Thomas G. Voss, eds.
- Chickering, Jesse. A Statistical View of the Population of Massachusetts, From 1765 to 1840. Boston: 1846.
- Child, Lydia Maria. Lydia Maria Child: Selected Letters, 1817-1880. Milton Meltzer, Patricia G. Holland and Francine Krasno, eds. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982.
- Cooke, Rollin H., comp. "Berkshire Star and Other Newspapers Vital Records 1817-1849." Typescript at Berkshire Athenaeum.
- Corbin Collection Massachusetts Vital Records (New England Historic Genealogical Society): Granby & Goshen, reel 7; Northampton, reels 15-16; Lanesborough 1754-1942, reel 37. Berkshire Athenaeum Local History Dept.
- Dall, Caroline H. Woman's Rights Under the Law: In Three Lectures, Delivered in Boston, January, 1861. Boston: 1861.
- Dalton 1820, 1850 & 1860 Tax Valuation Lists. Assessors' Office, Town Hall, Dalton, MA.
- DeBow, J.D.B. Statistical View of the United States. New York: Gordon & Breach 1970 reprint of 1854 ed.
- Deerfield Assessors' Tax and Valuation Lists: reel 1: 1787-1812; reel 2: 1813-1839. Microfilm at Henry N. Flynt Library, Historic Deerfield, MA.
- Deerfield Probate Records 1800-1836, James A. Martin, comp.: v. 1: 1800-1805, v. 2: 1806-1812, v. 3: 1813-1816, v. 4: 1816-1818, v. 5: 1819, v. 6: 1819-1821. Typescripts at Henry N. Flynt Library, Historic Deerfield, MA.
- Department of the Interior, Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census. Washington, D.C.: 1883.
- DeWitt, Francis. Statistical Information Relating to Certain Branches of Industry in Massachusetts, For the Year Ending June 1, 1855. Boston: 1856.
- [Dodge, Mary Abby.] Gail Hamilton's Life in Letters, 2 vol. H. Augusta Dodge, ed. Boston: 1901.
- Dun, R.G. & Company Credit Reports, Massachusetts Volume 3 [1840-1880+]. Baker Library, Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration, Boston, MA.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. Emerson in His Journals. Joel Porte, ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Farrar, Eliza Ware Rotch (Mrs. John). The Young Lady's Friend, revised edition. New York: 1860.

Goshen Tax Lists: 1802 & 1820. Microfilm reel #114, Forbes Collection. Forbes Library, Northampton.

Granby Tax Lists: 1800 & 1824. Microfilm reel #134, Forbes Collection. Forbes Library, Northampton.

Graves, Mrs. A.J. Girlhood and Womanhood: Or, Sketches of My Schoolmates. Boston: 1844.

---- Woman in America; Being an Examination into the Moral and Intellectual Condition of American Female Society. New York: 1843.

Grimké, Sarah. Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and Other Essays. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.

Hale, Sarah Josepha. "Rights of Married Women," Godey's Lady's Book 14 (May 1837): 212-214.

Hampshire County Superior Court pre-1850 Divorce Index.

Hampshire Gazette. Index & microfilm to 1820 at Berkshire Athenaeum.

Hawthorne, Manning ed. "Aunt Ebe: Some Letters of Elizabeth M. Hawthorne," New England Quarterly 20 (1947): 214-215.

Hosmer, J.B. Day Book #1, Curtisville [Stockbridge], 1846-1847. Berkshire Athenaeum.

Jewett, Susan W. "An Old Maid's Reflections on Woman's Rights," Ladies' Repository 14 (April 1854): 161-164. UMass microfilm A83, reel #894.

Lanesborough Tax Lists: 1803, 1808, 1820, 1850, 1860. Lanesborough Town Hall.

Lesley, Susan I. Recollections of My Mother, Mrs. Anne Jean [Robbins] Lyman of Northampton. Boston: 1899.

Longfellow, Fanny Appleton. Mrs. Longfellow: Selected Letters and Journals of Fanny Appleton Longfellow (1817-1861), Edward Wagenknecht, ed. New York: 1956.

Martineau, Harriet. Harriet Martineau on Women, Gayle Graham Yates, ed. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1985.

Massachusetts Direct Tax of 1798. Microfilm at Berkshire Athenaeum.

Northampton Registry of Probate Records. Connecticut Valley Historical Museum, Springfield, MA. Reels # 1.10 & 1.11 at Forbes Library, Northampton.

- Northampton Tax Lists: 1800 & 1814. Northampton Town Papers, reel #146, Forbes Library, Northampton.
- Penny, Virginia. The Employments of Women: A Cyclopedia of Women's Work. Boston: 1863.
- Phelps, Elizabeth Stuart. Chapters From A Life. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1897.
- Pittsfield Sun, 1800-1860. Microfilm at Berkshire Athenaeum.
- Pittsfield Tax Records. Pittsfield Bicentennial Commission microfilm at Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield, MA: reel 1, 1772-1797; reel 2, 1798-1808; reel 3, 1809-1814; reel 4, 1815-1818; reel 5, 1819-1824; reel 6, 1825-1828; reel 7, 1829-1831 (with 1827 valuation list, out of sequence); reel 12, 1849-1879.
- Pittsfield Vital Records: birth index reel 1; marriage index reel 2; death index reel 3; lists 1761-1850 reel 9 and 1845-1900 reel 10. Berkshire Athenaeum Local History Dept.
- [Richards, Anna Matlock (Mrs.)] Memories of a Grandmother, by a Lady of Massachusetts. Boston: Gould & Lincoln, 1854.
- Rowson, Susanna Haswell. Charlotte Temple. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986 (first American edition 1794).
- Secretary of the Treasury. Documents Relative to the Manufactures in the United States . . . 1832, vol. 1. New York: 1833.
- Sheffield Tax Assessors' Lists: 1800, 1809, 1821, 1850 & 1860. Sheffield Public Library. [Bushnell Memorial Library.]
- Sheffield Vital Records. Microfilm at Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield.
- Smith, Elizabeth Oakes (Prince) [1806-1893.] Selections from the Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes [Prince] Smith, Mary Alice Wyman, ed. New York: Arno Press, 1980.
- Smith, Lydia. "Journal, 1805-1806," Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings 48 (1914-1915): 508-534.
- Stanton, Elizabeth Cady, et. al. History of Woman Suffrage, v. 1 (1881). New York: 1971 reprint of 1898 ed.
- Stearns, Asahel and Lemuel Shaw. General Laws of Massachusetts to 1822, 2 vol. Boston: 1823.
- Stockbridge Tax Lists: 1803 & 1826. Stockbridge Library Historical Room.
- Stockbridge Valuation List, 1861. Stockbridge Town Hall.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher. "The Cathedral," first published 1864 Atlantic Monthly, collected in The Oven Birds, Gail Parker, ed. New York: Doubleday, 1972.

U.S. Census: 1790, 1800, 1810, 1820, 1850, 1860, 1870: Pittsfield, Dalton, Lanesborough, Sheffield, Stockbridge, Blandford, Northampton, Ashfield, Goshen, Granby, & Deerfield, MA.

Vital Records of Conway to 1850. Boston: New England Historical Genealogical Society, 1943.

Vital Records of Hinsdale to 1850. Boston: New England Historical Genealogical Society, 1902.

Vital Records of Peru to 1850. Boston: New England Historical Genealogical Society, 1902.

Vital Records of Richmond to 1850. Boston: New England Historical Genealogical Society, 1913.

Vital Records of Washington to 1850. Boston: New England Historical Genealogical Society, 1904.

Vital Records of West Stockbridge to 1850. Boston: New England Historical Genealogical Society, 1907.

Vital Records of Williamstown to 1850. Boston: New England Historical Genealogical Society, 1907.

Vital Records of Windsor to 1850. Boston: New England Historical Genealogical Society, 1917.

Whiting, Margaret. "The Freedom Suit," Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Proceedings 7 (1921-1929): 569-574.

Windrow, Mrs. William, comp. "North Adams Baptist Church Record of Members . . . Before 1860." 1940. Typescript at Berkshire Athenaeum.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. Vindication of the Rights of Woman. New York: Penguin Viking, 1985 (first published 1792).

Wright, Carroll D. The Working Girls of Boston. New York: Arno Press, 1969 reprint of Boston: 1889 edition. [From 1884 Report of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor.]

Wright, Frances. Course of Popular Lectures New York: Arno Press, 1972 reprint of 1834 edition.

Secondary Sources

- Abbott, Edith. Women in Industry. New York: Appleton, 1924.
- Addison, Daniel Delaney. Lucy Larcom: Life, Letters and Diary. Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1971 reprint of 1894 edition.
- Almy, Charles Jr. and Horace W. Fuller. The Law of Married Women. Boston: 1878.
- Annin, Katherine. Richmond, Massachusetts . . . 1765-1965. Richmond Civic Association, 1964.
- Bailyn, Bernard. New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century. New York: Harper, 1955.
- Basch, Norma. In the Eyes of the Law: Women, Marriage, and Property in Nineteenth-Century New York. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982.
- "Equity Vs. Equality: Emerging Concepts of Women's Political Status in the Age of Jackson," Journal of the Early Republic, 3 (fall 1983): 297-318.
- Beard, Mary Ritter. Woman as Force in History. New York: 1946.
- Biemer, Linda Briggs. Women and Property in Colonial New York: The Transition from Dutch to English Law, 1643-1727. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983.
- Bishop, Joel Prentiss. Commentaries on the Law of Married Women (2 v.) Boston: Little, Brown, 1873.
- Boltwood, Lucius, comp. History and Genealogy of the Family of Thomas Noble of Westfield, MA. Hartford: 1878.
- Boydston, Jeanne. Home and Work: Housework, Wages and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic. 1990.
- Boydston, Jeanne, Mary Kelley and Anne Margolis. The Limits of Sisterhood: The Beecher Sisters on Women's Rights and Women's Sphere. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988.
- Brown, C.A. "Elder John Leland and the Mammoth Cheshire Cheese," Agricultural History 18 (October 1944): 145-153.
- Buel, Joy Day & Richard Buel, Jr. The Way of Duty: A Woman and Her Family in Revolutionary America. New York: Norton, 1984.

- Carr, Lois Green. "Inheritance in the Colonial Chesapeake," Women in the American Revolution. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989.
- Chambers-Schiller, Lee Virginia. Liberty, A Better Husband, Single Women in America: The Generations of 1780-1840. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984.
- Chickering, Jesse. A Statistical View of the Population of Massachusetts, from 1765 to 1840. Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1846.
- Chused, Richard H. "Married Women's Property Law: 1800-1850," Georgetown Law Journal 71, #5 (June 1983): 1359-1425.
- Clark, Christopher. The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- Clark, David Lee. "Brockden Brown and the Rights of Women," University of Texas Bulletin #2212: March 22, 1922 (Comparative Literature Series #2).
- Cole, Phyllis. "The Advantage of Loneliness: Mary Moody Emerson's Almanacks, 1802-1855," Emerson: Prospect and Retrospect, Joel Porte, ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982.
- Cott, Nancy. The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977.
- "Divorce and the Changing Status of Women," The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective, 2d edition, Michael Gordon, ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978.
- Darling, Arthur B. Political Changes in Massachusetts, 1824-1848. Cos Cob, CT: John E. Edwards, 1968.
- Degler, Carl N. "Woman as Force in History by Mary Beard," Daedalus 103, #1 (Winter 1973): 67-73.
- Deming, Judson Keith, comp. Genealogy of the Descendants of John Deming of Wethersfield, Connecticut. Dubuque, IA: 1904.
- Desmond, Humphrey J. The Know-Nothing Party. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1966 reprint of 1904 Washington ed.
- Dexter, Elisabeth Anthony. Career Women of America, 1776-1840. Clifton, NJ: Augustus M. Kelley, 1972 reprint of Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950 edition.
- Dexter, Franklin Bowditch. Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College, v. 2. New York: Holt, 1896.

- Ditz, Toby L. "Ownership and Obligation: Inheritance and Patriarchal Households in Connecticut, 1750-1820," William and Mary Quarterly 3d series, v. XLVII no. 2 (April 1990): 235-265.
- Doherty, Robert. Society and Power: Five New England Towns, 1800-1860. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977.
- Dublin, Thomas, ed. Farm to Factory: Women's Letters, 1830-1860. New York: Columbia University Press, 1981.
- Women at Work. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.
- Faragher, John Mack. Women and Men on the Oregon Trail. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.
- Folbre, Nancy. "Patriarchy in Colonial New England," The Review of Radical Political Economics 12:2 (Summer 1980): 4-13.
- Gregg, Edith, ed. Letters of Ellen Tucker Emerson. Kent, OH: Kent State Press, 1982.
- Hallock, Terry. Early Houses of Richmond, Massachusetts. [Pittsfield, MA]: Hallocraft, 1959.
- Haskins, George Lee. Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts. New York: Macmillan, 1960.
- Hayden, Doris. "Blandford Families," typescript at Berkshire Athenaeum.
- Henretta, James A. "Families and Farms," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d series XXXV (January 1978): 3-32.
- Hoffman, Ronald and Peter J. Albert. Women in the Age of the American Revolution. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1989.
- Holderness, B.A. "Widows in Pre-Industrial Society: An Essay Upon Their Economic Functions," Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle, Richard M. Smith, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- Hudson, Clara E. Plain Tales from Plainfield, or, The Way Things Used To Be. Northampton, MA: 1962.
- Jenson, Carol Elizabeth. "The Equity Jurisdiction and Married Women's Property in Antebellum America: A Revisionist View," International Journal of Women's Studies (March-April 1979): 144-154.
- Jones, Alice Hanson, with Boris Simkovich. "The Wealth of Women, 1774," Strategic Factors in Nineteenth Century American History. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

- Kelley, Mary. "A Woman Alone, Catherine Maria Sedgwick's Spinsterhood in Nineteenth-Century America," New England Quarterly 51, #2 (June 1978): 209-225.
- Kerr, Andrea Moore. Lucy Stone: Speaking Out for Equality. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992.
- Kessler, Helen R. "The Worlds of Abigail Brackett Lyman," unpublished master's thesis. Tufts University, 1976.
- Kessler-Harris, Alice. Out To Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.
- Keyssar, A. "Widowhood in Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts: A Problem in the History of the Family," Perspectives in American History, v. 8 (1974): 83-119.
- Koehler, Lyle. A Search for Power: The "Weaker Sex" in Seventeenth-Century New England. Urbana, IL: 1980.
- Lebsock, Suzanne. The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860. New York: W.W. Norton, 1985.
- Lee: The Centennial Celebration. For the town, 1878.
- Lerner, Gerda. "The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson," Midcontinent American Studies Journal v. 10, #1 (spring 1969): 5-15.
- Lockridge, Kenneth A. Literacy in Colonial New England. New York: W.W. Norton, 1974.
- Marsh, Dwight Whitney. Marsh Genealogy. Amherst, MA: 1895.
- Massachusetts General Laws Annotated, v. 33. St. Paul, Minnesota: West Publishing, 1987.
- Morris, Richard B. Studies in the History of American Law, 2d ed. New York: Octagon Books, 1964.
- Mulkern, John R. The Know-Nothing Party in Massachusetts: The Rise and Fall of a People's Movement. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990.
- Norton, Mary Beth. Liberty's Daughters: the Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800. Boston: Little, Brown, 1980.
- Osterud, Nancy Grey. Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.
- Palfrey, John G. Statistics of . . . Certain Branches of Industry in Massachusetts . . . Boston: Dutton & Wentworth, 1846.
- Pease, Charles Stanley, ed. History of Conway. Springfield, MA, 1917.

- Pessen, Edward. Riches, Class and Power Before the Civil War. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Co., 1973.
- Premo, Terri L. Winter Friends: Women Growing Old in the New Republic, 1785-1835. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990.
- Pryor, Elizabeth Brown. Clara Barton, Professional Angel. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987.
- Purdy, Virginia Cardwell. Portrait of a Know-Nothing Legislature: The Massachusetts General Court of 1855. New York: Garland Publishing, 1989. Doctoral Dissertation, George Washington University, 1970.
- Rabkin, Peggy A. "Origins of Law Reform: The Social Significance of the Nineteenth Century Codification Movement and its Contribution to the Passage of the Early Married Women's Property Acts [in New York]," Buffalo Law Review v. 24, #3 (spring 1975): 683-760.
- Fathers to Daughters: The Legal Foundations of Female Emancipation. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980.
- The Silent Feminist Revolution: Women and the Law in New York State from Blackstone to the Beginnings of the American Women's Rights Movement. Unpublished dissertation: SUNY-Buffalo, 1975. UMI microprint.
- Raynor, Ellen M. and Emma L. Petitcherc. History of the Town of Cheshire. Holyoke, MA: 1885.
- Richmond, Joshua Bailey. The Richmond Family. Boston: 1897.
- Rothenberg, Winifred Barr. From Market-Places to a Market Economy: The Transformation of Rural Massachusetts, 1750-1850. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Salmon, Marylynn. Women and the Law of Property in Early America. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1986.
- Shammas, Carole, Marylynn Salmon and Michel Dahlin. Inheritance in America from Colonial Times to the Present. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987.
- Sheldon, George. A History of Deerfield, Massachusetts, 2 volumes. Deerfield, MA: Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, 1972 facsimile of 1895-1896 edition.
- Sloat, Caroline F., ed. Meet Your Neighbors: New England Portraits, Painters and Society, 1790-1850. Sturbridge, MA: Old Sturbridge Village, 1992.
- Smith, Daniel Scott. "Family Limitation, Sexual Control and Domestic Feminism in Victorian America," Clio's Consciousness Raised, Mary S. Hartman and Lois Banner, eds. New York: Harper & Row, 1974.

- Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- "The Female World of Love and Ritual . . ." The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective, 2d edition, Michael Gordon, ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978.
- Soltow, Lee. Distribution of Wealth and Income in the United States in 1798. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989.
- Men and Wealth in the United States, 1850-1870. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975.
- "Socioeconomic Classes in South Carolina and Massachusetts in the 1790s and the Observations of John Drayton," South Carolina Historical Magazine v. 81, #4 (October 1980): 283-305.
- Sprague, Henry H. Women Under the Law of Massachusetts: Their Rights, Privileges, and Disabilities, 2d ed. Boston: Little, Brown, 1903.
- Stiles, Henry R. The History of Ancient Wethersfield, Connecticut. New York: Grafton Press, 1904.
- Strickland, Charles. Victorian Domesticity: Families in the Life and Art of Louisa May Alcott. University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1985.
- Taylor, William R. and Christopher Lasch. "Two 'Kindred Spirits': Sorority and Family in New England, 1839-1846," New England Quarterly 36 (1963): 23-41.
- Trowbridge, Francis Bacon. The Ashley Genealogy. New Haven: 1896.
- Trumbull, James Russell. History of Northampton, v. 1-2. Northampton, MA: 1898.
- Tryon, Rolla Milton. Household Manufactures in the United States, 1640-1860. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1917.
- Turbin, Carole. Working Women of Collar City: Gender, Class and Community in Troy, New York, 1864-86. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992.
- Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher. Good Wives. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.
- A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812. New York: Random House, 1991.
- Vinovskis, Maris A. and Richard M. Bernard. "The Female School Teacher in Ante-Bellum Massachusetts," Journal of Social History v. 10 #3 (March 1977): 332-345.
- Violette, Augusta Genevieve. Economic Feminism in American Literature Prior to 1848. Orono, Maine: University of Maine, 1925.

- Walsh, James P. "Mechanics and Citizens: The Connecticut Artisan Protest of 1792," William & Mary Quarterly, 3d ser. 42, #1 (January 1985): 67-89.
- Warbasse, Elizabeth B. The Changing Rights of Married Women, 1800-1861. New York: Garland Publishing, 1987.
- "Mary Upton Ferrin," Notable American Women 1607-1950: 611-612. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971.
- Waterman, William Randall. "Frances Wright," [Columbia University] Studies in History, Economics and Law 115, #1 (whole number 256) (1924).
- Weil, Dorothy. In Defense of Women: Susanna Rowson (1762-1824). Pennsylvania University Press, 1976.
- Weisberg, D. Kelly, ed. Women and the Law: A Social Historical Perspective, volume II: Property, Family and the Legal Profession. Cambridge, MA: Schenkman, 1982.
- Wells, Daniel White and Reuben Field Wells. A History of Hatfield, Massachusetts. Springfield, MA: 1910.
- Welter, Barbara. "The Cult of True Womanhood," The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective, 2d ed. Michael Gordon, ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978.
- Wright, Carroll D. The History and Growth of the United States Census. Washington D.C.: 1900.
- Yasuba, Yasukichi. Birthrates of the White Population in the United States 1800-1860. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962.

Other Sources Consulted

Primary Sources

Acts and Resolves, Public and Private of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, 21 v. Boston: 1869-1922.

Andrews, Thomas Eliot, ed. "The Diary of Elizabeth (Porter) Phelps," New England Historic Genealogical Register, v. 118-122 (1964-1968).

Bailey, Abigail. Memoirs of Mrs. Abigail Bailey, Ann Taves, ed. Bloomington, Indiana: 1989 reprint of 1815 Boston edition.

Bridgham, Eliza Williams. "A Journey through New England and New York in 1818," Magazine of History 2 (1905): 14-27, 90-95.

Chase, Freeman. Day Book, 1845. Massachusetts Historical Society.

Dall, Caroline Wells Healey. Alongside. New York: Arno Press, 1980.

Dickinson, Rebecca. Diary, in Daniel W. and Reuben F. Wells, History of Hatfield, Massachusetts, 1660-1910 (Springfield, MA: 1910): 206-207.

Farrar, Eliza Ware Rotch. Recollections of Seventy Years.

Fuller, Elizabeth. "Diary Kept by Elizabeth Fuller . . ." in Francis E. Blake, History of the Town of Princeton (Princeton, MA: 1915): 302-323.

[Johnson, J.] The Laws Respecting Women. Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana Publications, 1974 reprint of 1777 London edition.

Mitchell, Maria Callendar. A Short Account of the Early Part of the Life of Maria Mitchell . . . written by herself. New York: 1830.

Robbins, Caira. "Diary and Letters of Caira Robbins, 1794-1881," Ellen A. Stone, ed., Proceedings of the Lexington Historical Society 4 (1905-1910): 61-81.

Searle, Lucy. "Memoir of Mrs. Sarah Atkins," Essex Institute Historical Collections 85 (1949): 151-180.

Smith, Elizabeth Oakes Prince. Selections from the Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes [Prince] Smith, Mary Alice Wyman, ed. New York: Arno Press, 1980 reprint of 1980 ed.

Smith, Lydia. "Journal, 1805," Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings 48 (1914-1915): 508-534.

Storrow, Ann Gillam. "Letters of Ann Gillam Storrow to Jared Sparks," Frances B. Blanshard, ed. Smith College Studies in History 6, #3 (April 1921): 189-252.

Swift, Mary. "Journal of Mary Swift [Lamson], 1839-1840," in The First State Normal School in America: The Journals of Cyrus Peirce and Mary Lamson. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926.

Tucker, Mary Orne. "Diary, 1802," Essex Institute Historical Collections 77 (1941): 306-335.

Secondary Sources

Basch, Norma. "Invisible Women: The Legal Fiction of Marital Unity in Nineteenth Century America," Feminist Studies V (summer 1979): 346-166.

Beard, Mary Ritter. America Through Women's Eyes. New York: 1933.

---- On Understanding Women. 1931.

Bishop, Joel Prentiss. Commentaries on the Law of Married Women, 2 v. Boston: Little, Brown, 1873.

Blackwell, Marilyn S. "The Republican Vision of Mary Palmer Tyler," Journal of the Early Republic 12 (spring 1992), 11-35.

Brown, Richard D. "Emergence of Urban Society in Rural Massachusetts, 1760-1820," Journal of American History 61 (June 1974): .

Chafetz, Jane Saltzman & Anthony Gary Dworkin. Female Revolt: Women's Movements in World and Historical Perspective. Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1986.

Chase, Mary Ellen. "Sarah Orne Jewett as a Social Historian," World of Dunnet Landing, David Bonnell Green, ed. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962.

Clark, Christopher. "Economics and Culture: Opening Up the Rural History of the Early American Northeast," American Quarterly 43 (June 1991).

Descendants of James Ensign, the Puritan, 1634-1939. (n.a. n.p. n.d.) Berkshire Athenaeum.

Desmond, Humphrey J. The Know-Nothing Party: A Sketch by Humphrey J. Desmond. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1966 reprint of 1904 Washington ed.

Ernst, George A. O. The Law of Married Women in Massachusetts. Boston: Little, Brown, 1897.

Fairbanks, Carol & Sarah Brooks Sundberg. Farm Women on the Prairie Frontier. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1983.

- Faragher, John Mack. Women and Men on the Overland Trail. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.
- Fischer, David Hackett. Albion's Seed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Foster, Lawrence. Women, Family and Utopia: Communal Experiments of the Shakers, the Oneida Community, and the Mormons. Syracuse University Press, 1991.
- Frey, Sylvia R. and Marian J. Morton. New World, New Roles: A Documentary History of Women in Pre-Industrial America. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986.
- Goodrich Family in America. L.W. Case, ed. Chicago: 1889.
- Haynes, George H. "The Causes of Know-Nothing Success in Massachusetts," American Historical Review v. 3, #1 (October 1897): 67-82.
- Humez, Jean. Mother's First-Born Daughters: Early Shaker Writings on Women and Religion. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1993.
- Jones, Alice Hanson. "Estimating Wealth of the Living from a Probate Sample," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 13 #2 (1982): 273-300.
- Kinzie, Juliette M. Wau-Bun: The "Early Day" in the Northwest. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992.
- Larkin, Jack. The Reshaping of Everyday Life, 1790-1840. New York: Harper & Row, 1988.
- Martin, Frances S. Lanesborough, Massachusetts: The Story of a Wilderness Settlement, 1765-1965. For the town, 1965.
- Palmer, Charles J. History of the Town of Lanesborough, Massachusetts, 1741-1905, part 1. n.p. n.d.
- Riley, Glenda. The Female Frontier. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988.
- Robbins Family File, Berkshire Athenaeum.
- Rossiter, W.S., ed. A Century of Population Growth: From the First Census of the United States to the Twelfth, 1790-1900. 1909 reprinted Baltimore, 1967.
- Ryan, Mary P. Womanhood in America, From Colonial Times to the Present. New York: Franklin Watts, 1975.
- Sklar, Kathryn Kish and Thomas Dublin. Women and Power in American History: A Reader, v. 1 to 1880. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1991.
- Smith, Daniel Blake. Inside the Great House: Planter Family Life in Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Society. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980.

- Sprague, Henry H. Women Under the Laws of Massachusetts: Their Rights, Privileges, and Disabilities, 2d ed. Boston: Little, Brown, 1903.
- Welter, Barbara. Dimity Convictions. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1976.
- Williams, Stephen W. Genealogy and History of the Family of Williams. Greenfield, MA: 1847. (Index in Corbin Collection.)
- Woloch, Nancy. Early American Women: A Documentary History, 1600-1900. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1992.

